Just Do It

How explicit attention to vocabulary teaching and learning within the English Language and Culture Department at Radboud University in Nijmegen can boost vocabulary enhancement.

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Introduction

This thesis is written in the context of the Language and Communication Coaching specialisation of the linguistics master at Radboud University. This specialisation educates students to become independent English language and communication trainers and part of this course is a practical internship, usually with a language institute. My internship was slightly different, because it took place in the English Language and Culture department at Radboud University.

   The department claims its students graduate at CEFR C2 (Faculty of Languages, Radboud Universiteit, 2012: http://www.ru.nl/engels/@837549/pagina/). Generally, freshmen start their English Language and Culture studies at a general English level of B2 with the exception of reading skills, which is estimated at C1 (ERK, 2013). In three years of university, students therefore need to move from B2 to C2 which is a challenging task to complete. Exactly how challenging this is, is demonstrated by the gap between the CEFR descriptors for a B2 and a C2 level of vocabulary range and control.

RANGE	
B2	C2
Has a good range of vocabulary for matters connected to his/her field and most general topics. Can vary formulation to avoid frequent repetition, but lexical gaps can still cause hesitation and circumlocution	Has a good command of a very broad lexical repertoire including idiomatic expressions and colloquialisms; shows awareness of connotative levels of meaning.

CONTROL	
B2	C2
Lexical accuracy is generally high, though some confusion and incorrect word choice does occur without hindering communication	Consistently correct and appropriate use of vocabulary.

Compared to B2, C2 requires the student to control a much broader range of vocabulary which exceeds limitations to the students' area of interest and most general topics. Furthermore, B2 stills allows for "lexical gaps" and "circumlocution" whilst C2 requires "awareness of connotative levels of meaning" and "idiomatic expressions and colloquialisms" which does not only cumulate into C2 asking for a broader range, but a deeper understand and control of the vocabulary used. In terms of control, C2 requires consistent accuracy and appropriateness whereas B2 allows for "some confusion and incorrect word choice".

The courses which are dedicated to improving students' vocabulary and help them bridge the gap between B2 and C2 are a 28-week oral communication skills course in the first year (henceforth OCS) and a 21-week academic communications skills course (henceforth ACS) in the second year. The ACS course is split into 14 weeks of oral communication skills and 7 weeks of writing skills.

The study guide for academic year 2015 – 2016 formulates the following objectives for the Oral Communication Course and Academic Communication Course:

OCS	ACS
• can understand standard spoken language, live or broadcast, on both familiar and unfamiliar topics normally encountered in social, professional or academic life and identify speaker viewpoints and attitudes as well as the information content;	• demonstrate that your proficiency both in terms of spoken production and interaction as well as listening is CEFR C1or higher;
• can follow lectures, talks and reports and other forms of academic/professional presentation which are propositionally and linguistically complex;	• are familiar with the relevant CEFR descriptors and scales and will be able to interpret them and apply them to your own proficiency as well as that of your peers;
• can use the language fluently, accurately and effectively, with few significant vocabulary errors, on a wide range of general topics, marking clearly the relationships between ideas;	• have been taught to speak RP, but also recognise other major regional and social dialects of the UK.
• can communicate spontaneously with good grammatical control without much sign of having to restrict what they want to say;	
• can give clear, systematically developed descriptions and presentations, with appropriate highlighting of significant points, and relevant supporting detail;	
• have a clear, natural, pronunciation and intonation without or with a minimum of L1 interference.	

Chapter I: Vocabulary in the ETC curriculum

The following chapter's main aim is to identify what the problem exactly entails in greater detail. The process of Needs Analysis lends itself perfectly well for the purpose of zooming in on the characteristics and individual aspects of the larger issue at hand. My internship was therefore primarily concerned with conducting this thorough needs analysis. This chapter will first present the brief for the internship and the middle section will identify the different stakeholders, after all, there are multiple parties involved in vocabulary teaching and acquisition within the English department at Radboud University and their individual and collective opinions need to be analysed for conflicting or matching content. The final paragraph outlines the structure of the thesis.

Brief

The origin of this internship was a general sense of unease felt by teachers about their students' vocabulary acquisition processes as well as dissatisfaction felt by students about the vocabulary component of OCS and ACS.

The brief of the internship was to investigate these feelings, map them out and relate them too each other. In concrete steps, that meant the following:

1. Investigate opinions through the means of questionnaires and semi-structured interviews.

2. Analyse theory on vocabulary teaching, learning and acquiring.

3. Triangulate the opinions and theory.

4. Compose suggestions for improvement.

The starting point is OCS and ACS in its current form. OCS students are required to build individual "Personal Idiom Files", to be completed independently, they are provided with a vocabulary course book, *Advanced Vocabulary in Use* (henceforth AViU)*,* which through the means of individual study culminates into a vocabulary test, and the promotion of English speaking through class discussions and presentations in order to facilitate implicit vocabulary learning. It would seem then, that the student is required to undertake vocabulary acquisition almost entirely independently. ACS students follow a similar path which also pertains a Personal Idiom File, a vocabulary course book, Academic Vocabulary in Use (henceforth AcViU), and class presentations followed by class discussions. The added element for ACS students is that they are required to write an academic article in the last seven weeks of the program.

The Stakeholders

Any proper needs analysis initially identifies the different stakeholders involved in the problem to be investigated. The stakeholders that are relevant for this thesis can be divided into two groups: the teachers and the students. The teachers, four to be exact, have taught and are currently teaching OCS or ACS or both to first year or second year students. Names have been omitted from this thesis in order to provide a low level of anonymity. All information has been handled with care and all teachers have screened the information they provided in the form of interviews before it was presented in this thesis.

The second stakeholder group, the students, can be subdivided into two groups; the first year and second year students. First year students take Oral Communication Skills (OCS A in the first semester and OCS B in the second semester) and second year students take Academic Communication Skills. ACS students are subjected to communication skills that are primarily focused on academics, thus, resulting in a reduction of hours that can be spend on vocabulary learning and common oral communication skills. Both groups have been included in this needs analysis because just one of the two would not contain enough sources of information in order to provide me with a complete needs analysis. The variable of having received one or two years of OCS education only influences the results of vocabulary range and control analysis and since this thesis mostly focuses on how all stakeholders experience vocabulary teaching, all opinions of those that have received vocabulary teaching are equally valuable.

Structure

Chapter 1 discusses the place of vocabulary teaching and learning the department of English language and culture, with special reference to the first-year Oral Communication Skills course and the second-year Academic Skills course, and it also identifies the stakeholders in the process. In chapter 2 the investigation into the problems surrounding vocabulary teaching and learning is discussed. Chapter 3 centers round the existing literature on L2 vocabulary acquisition and in chapter 4 this knowledge is related to the problems formulated in chapter 3. Chapter 5 contains a number of reasoned suggestions and recommendations for alleviating the situation. Finally, chapter 6 briefly touches on the weaknesses of the research project and makes a few suggestions for future lines of research, while it also contains a reflection on my personal growth as a language coach.

Chapter II: Investigating the vocabulary situation

The following chapter outlines the investigation that was conducted concerning the dissatisfaction and unease felt by students and teachers on the subject of vocabulary teaching, acquisition and learning within the English Language and Culture department of the Radboud University in Nijmegen.

The first half of this chapter will discuss the methodology used and the second half presents the results and analysis of both the semi-structured interviews held with teachers, the questionnaires administered to both OCS and ACS students, and the semi-structured group discussion conducted with a group of OCS students after they filled in their questionnaires.

Needs Analysis as a method

The investigation conducted in this thesis is based on the ESP concept of needs analysis. The following paragraph will illustrate why the practice of needs analysis lends itself well for this investigation of opinions on vocabulary teaching, learning and acquisition from two main sources.

"Analysis of Needs" is a term first used in the 1920s (Howatt, 1984; Tickoo, 1988) by Michael West to indicate the process of covering potentially conflicting needs of language learners and what effects those needs have on the manner of learning (West, 1994). *The Handbook of Language Teaching* provides a definition for the contemporary term of needs analysis: "Needs Analysis (NA) is the systematic collection and analysis of all information necessary for defining a defensible curriculum" (Brown, 2011). A defensible curriculum is subsequently defined as: "… one that satisfies the language learning and teaching requirements of the students and teachers within the context of particular institution(s) involved" (Brown, 2011). The fact that needs analysis focuses on conflicting needs of both teachers and students provide the validation for the choice of conducting a needs analysis as the methodology for this thesis. Needs analysis as a vital part of ESP lends itself well for the purpose of this thesis because "if learners, sponsors and teachers know why the learners need English, that awareness will have an influence on what will be acceptable as reasonable content in the language course and, on the positive side, what potential can be exploited" (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987).

The same handbook also presents an overview of the necessary steps of a proper needs analysis to take. Over the years, various linguistics have shaped the steps of needs analysis to its contemporary form (Schutz & Derwing, 1981; Jordan, 1997; Graves, 2000); the form that has provided this thesis with the backbone of its needs analysis:

Step 1: Preparation

The first step of the needs analysis is aimed at defining the purpose of the needs analysis, determining the stakeholders in the process and deciding on appropriate methodology of investigation for the situation at hand. For this thesis, that meant the brief of the internship needed to be examined, the stakeholder groups needed to be divided into teachers and students, which were subdivided into OCS and ACS classes. The teachers were going to be subjected to semi-structured interviews and the students were going to participate in questionnaires containing both rating and open questions.

Step 2: Conduct the investigation

This step consists of administering the questionnaires and conducting the interviews. The results of those two sources of information were processed and triangulated into a conclusion to the needs analysis

Step 3: Further activities

The triangulated conclusion to the needs analysis finally leads to the determination of implementations and suggestions in order to solve the brief that was provided during step 1. A vital part of needs analysis is to evaluate the needs analysis investigation afterwards in order to determine if the process yielded valid results in its specific situation.

Methodology: the teachers

Teachers were subjected to semi-structured interviews. The formulation of the questions administered can be found in appendix 1. In 2015/2016, four teachers were involved in OCS and ACS and all four were approached for a semi-structured interview. All of them initially agreed to be interviewed but one teacher was really hard to get hold off and unfortunately, in the end interviews with only three teachers took place.

Methodology: the students

The students' opinions on the vocabulary acquisition component of their OCS and ACS classes were sought through questionnaires. Paper questionnaires were handed out and filled in at the end of the OCS classes of two of the four teachers. The first teacher did not have any students at the time and the fourth teacher agreed to hand them out, but in the end no completed questionnaires from this group of students were received. ACS students received their invitation to complete the questionnaire via email.

The administration and completion figures are as follows:

	OCS	ACS
Administered	53 (100%)	39 (100%)
Completed	24 (45.3%)	13 (33.3%)

It is unfortunate that not all students filled in a questionnaire but with nearly half of the OCS students and one third of the ACS students responding, I have enough data to draw at least some preliminary conclusions.

The questionnaires were composed of 13 closed questions using 1 to 10 scales and 15 open questions, which makes for a total of 28 questions.

Results: Teachers

In the following section, the results of the semi-structured teacher interviews are presented. The three teachers are referred to as TA, TB and TC respectively.

1. What do you think of the current state of vocabulary acquisition amongst English Language and Culture students?

There is consensus among the three interviewees agree that there is reason for concern. TA, TB and TC describe the general attitude of students as "passive", with TC identifying a lack of natural curiosity in her students. In her opinion, students are more interested in passing courses and tests than in acquiring knowledge for the sake of knowledge. She relates this to insufficient study skills, and in particular, to a lack of learner autonomy.

TA points out repeatedly that there is never enough time in class to dedicate to vocabulary acquisition and the support to students required to maximize the effect of vocabulary assignments like the Personal Idiom File.

The weekly presentation is regarded as the activity that takes up too much time so that not enough time is left over for dedicated vocabulary acquisition activities, as identified by TB.

All three teachers mention that students generally unaware of the difference between active and passive vocabulary. They equate passive knowledge of a word with active knowledge of a word. TC added that she felt that students who choose to study English Language and Culture tend to believe that their English proficiency is high enough as it is.

2. Whose responsibility is it to enhance the vocabulary of a student?

All three agree that both teacher and student bare responsibility for the vocabulary acquisition. TA and TB feel that the teacher should "lead by example" and demonstrate to students that they too still actively increase their vocabulary making makes notes of words and expressions formerly unknown to them that they come across in their reading for example. TC specifically adds that the student should put in more effort.

3. What do you think of the PIFs?

All three concur that the PIF in itself is a good idea but the execution is flawed, in the sense that there is not enough class time to dedicate to supporting and scaffolding the students' work. TB points out that the point of the PIF is often lost on students, who treat PIFs as necessary evils that just need to be filled with a set number of words. These words are therefore found in Norton Anthologies or internet sites containing lists of challenging English words such as reddit.com and are very unlikely to be of any practical, lasting use to the student. It is perceived as just another assignment to pass the course. TA adds that she feels that students consider the PIFs to be too much work for too little credit.

4. What do you think of the course books (*Advanced English Vocabulary in Use* and *Academic Vocabulary in Use*)?

The three teachers are happy with the books in terms of the vocabulary presented and the accompanying exercises, but also agree that there is not enough time, if any, to incorporate the material into their classes. TA and TC believe that the material covered in the vocabulary books is too isolated in that there is no connection with the other course components and TC adds that she feels that students perceive the vocabulary book and the subsequent test as just another stand-alone assignment.

5. Have you executed any personal vocabulary teaching techniques in class?

All three teachers have tried their hand at various techniques. TA and TC tell students that they have their own PIFs, whereas TB presents the latest additions to her PIF in a PowerPoint each week. TB asks two students to present their "catch of the week" to the class while TC has added a competitive element to her "word of week", awarding points to students who manage to use the word of the week appropriately in class. TB has set up a Facebook page for her ACS students who post their PIF entries on a weekly basis. TB developed an awareness raising activity in which she presented a short text with a view to making students

aware of what vocabulary they know and do not know and what vocabulary would therefore qualify for inclusion in their PIFs. TB also tried to increase students' metacognitive skills by getting them to read academic articles from the *English Language Teaching Journal* (*ELT Journal*) on the use of vocabulary notebooks.

6. Is there potential to incorporate formal vocabulary teaching into other courses than OCS/ACS?

Although all three agreed that this would be of great value, they all realised that their literature and linguistics colleagues would not have enough time to do so.

7. What do you think is the biggest problem we need overcome in order to help student vocabulary acquisition along?

The strong consensus among the teachers is that the biggest problem is the attitude of students: lack of natural curiosity, seeing passing tests and courses as the ultimate goal of the learning process, being too easily persuaded to believe their language use is good enough as it is.

Concluding, it seems as though vocabulary acquisition is something that students need to do independently and autonomously. There is agreement among teachers that students are not very good at independent and autonomous vocabulary acquisition. The cause seemed to be located in the students' attitude towards and the perception of vocabulary and vocabulary acquisition. The teachers agree that the current set-up of the OCS and ACS courses does not allow for a substantial overhaul of the vocabulary acquisition component, which is partially the result of class time being used for other purposes, such as presentations and class discussions.

Results: Students

The following section will present the results per question. Individual questionnaires are referred to as O# for the OCS questionnaires and A# for the ACS questionnaires respectively.

- How would you rate your own spoken vocabulary in class on a scale from 1 to 10?

Rating of own vocabulary use for OCS
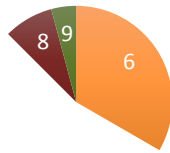
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Rating of own vocabulary use for ACS
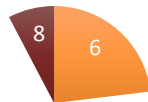
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Both ACS and OCS students are moderately happy with their own vocabulary use in class. The majority of both OCS and ACS give themselves a seven. No one rates their vocabulary use as insufficient with just three OCS and one ACS student giving themselves a higher score.

- Would you like to improve your own vocabulary use in English?

OCS students' wish to improve their vocabulary use

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

ACS students' wish to improve their vocabulary use

1 ■ 2 ■ 3 ■ 4 ■ 5 ■ 6 ■ 7 ■ 8 ■ 9 ■ 10
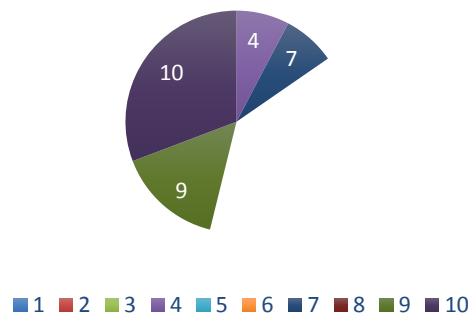
The majority of both OCS and ACS students feel a considerable need for improvement. More than half of the OCS students gives the highest rating whilst the ACS students are more divided.

- Do you feel like your vocabulary use in English has improved since you started studying English Language and Culture, and if so, how much?

Perceived overall improvement of OCS students' vocabulary

1 ■ 2 ■ 3 ■ 4 ■ 5 ■ 6 ■ 7 ■ 8 ■ 9 ■ 10
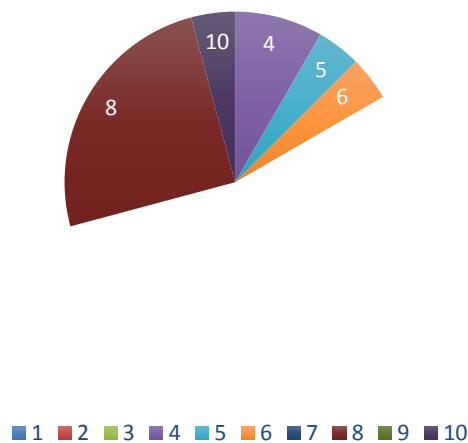
Perceived overall improvement of ACS students' vocabulary
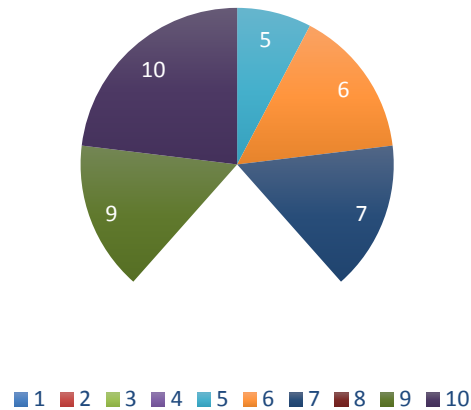
The majority of OCS students feels they moderately improved their vocabulary. ACS students are more divided in their opinion of improvement though the general consensus is that they improved nonetheless.

- How much do you feel you contributed yourself to your own vocabulary acquisition process?

OCS students' own contribution to vocabulary improvement
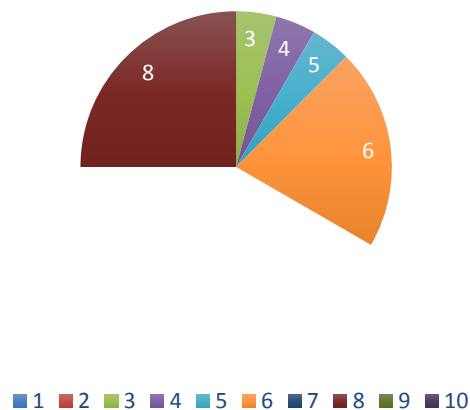
ACS students' own contribution to vocabulary improvement
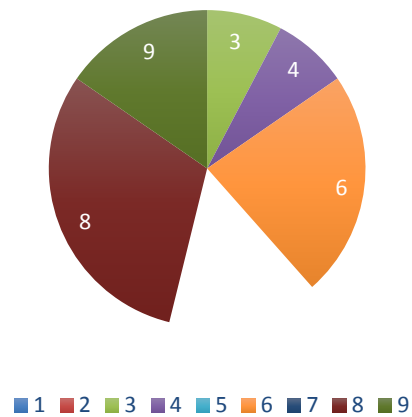
■ 1 ■ 2 ■ 3 ■ 4 ■ 5 ■ 6 ■ 7 ■ 8 ■ 9

- How much do you feel the OCS classes contributed to your vocabulary acquisition process?

OCS students' perceived class contribution to vocabulary improvement

■ 1 ■ 2 ■ 3 ■ 4 ■ 5 ■ 6 ■ 7 ■ 8 ■ 9 ■ 10
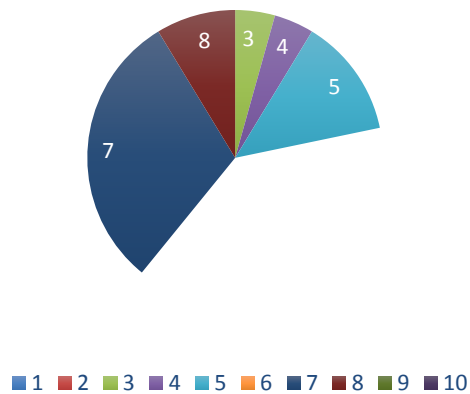
ACS students' perceived class contribution to vocabulary improvement
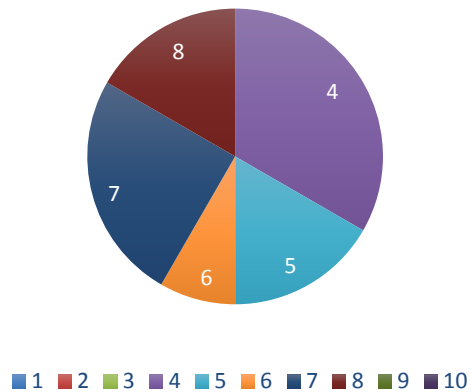
Students mostly contribute the improvements they made as a result of their vocabulary acquisition to themselves, but only by the narrowest of margins. It should also be noted that students seem to disagree more about their own contribution than they do about the OCS/ACS classes' contribution.

- Do you like the Personal Idiom Files?

OCS student ratings Personal Idiom File enjoyability
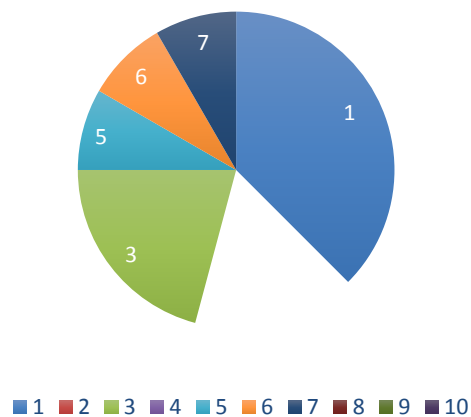
ACS student ratings Personal Idiom File enjoyability

Legend: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
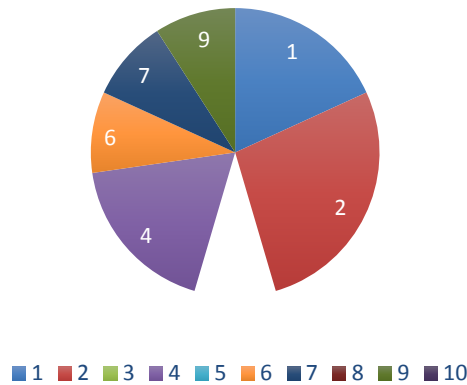
Neither the ACS or the OCS students rate PIF enjoyability high. The majority of students gives a rating lower than a 5. The overall opinion is negative. This question is backed-up by two open questions that demand clarification from the student on what exactly they would say they like and do not like about the Personal Idiom Files.

- What do you like about the Personal Idiom Files?

Nine of the OCS students fill in that there was "nothing" or "not much" to like about the PIFs. A group of the same quantity states that the likable feature of PIFs was connected to the PIF's purpose. They either find the PIFs to be interesting or that it brings them into contact with interesting material like articles and novels (4 students) or they are of the opinion that the concept of PIFs has its merits (5 students). The remainder of the OCS student group either did not answer the question or answers in a sarcastic manner: questionnaire O2 answers: "It makes me stay awake all night for a reason" and questionnaire O15 states: "It gives me the opportunity to learn new words that I'll immediately forget and never ever use." The majority of ACS students (9) agrees that the concept of the PIFs is something to like. This concept is described by questionnaire A2: "the idea of looking up words you do not know as a personal rule" and A6: "They facilitate the subconscious processes which happen when you meet a new word because you make the word explicit rather than just looking at them." Two ACS students voice that they like the possibility of personal input through the autonomous manner of choosing words for their PIFs and two ACS students left the question unanswered. The following question asks the students to name a feature of the PIFs they dislike.

- What don't you like about the Personal Idiom Files?

OCS and ACS students reach a near consensus about the main feature to dislike: 21 OCS students and 11 ACS students agree that the PIFs do not work because the words they contain are not retained by the students. Some questionnaires provide reasons for why the student believes the PIF words are not retained. O21 answers: "You don't acquisit [sic] words for you active knowledge" for example. Questionnaire O17 provides a summary of the general opinion the OCS students voiced about dislikable features of PIFs and the reason why, as students believe, the PIF words are not stored in their active knowledge: "It is just something that you have to do and you can do it 20 minutes, had [sic] it in, and never look at it again. I know that this is not what you are supposed to do, but it just not very challenging and you're not actually learning from it, you know that you won't be tested on it so instead you study for something you will be tested on."

- How much do the Personal Idiom Files help you improve your vocabulary?
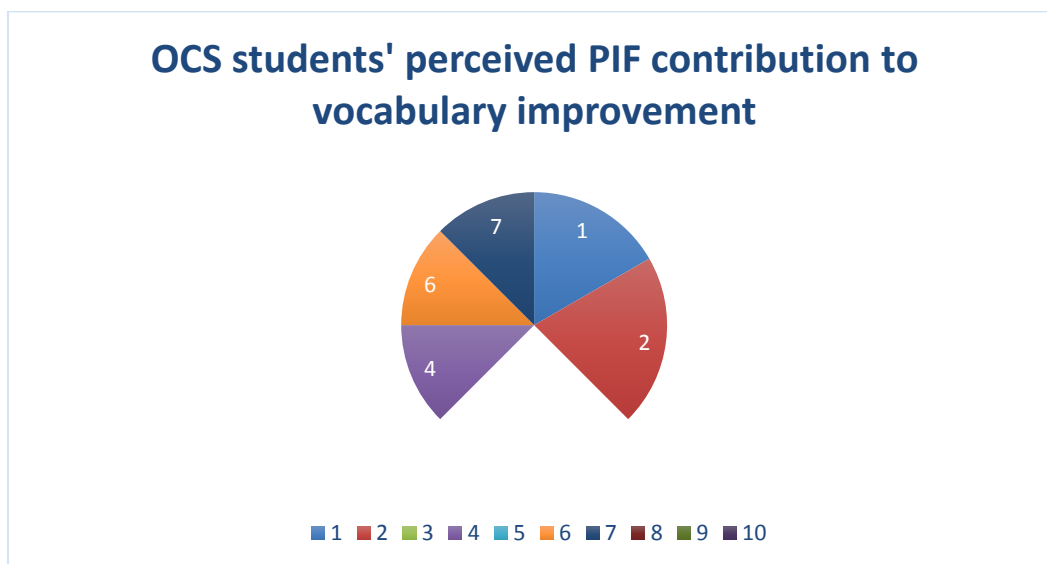
ACS students' perceived PIF contribution to vocabulary improvement
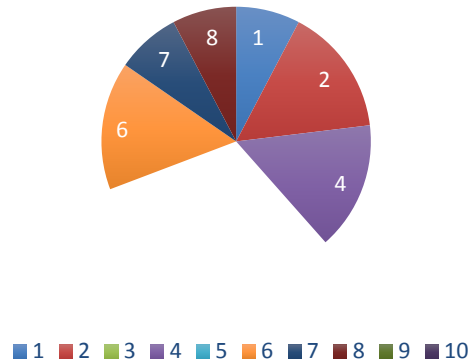
OCS students rate the contribution of PIFs to their vocabulary improvement lower than ACS students do, although the general consensus is that the PIFs are not effective. The students are asked to back-up their rating with an open question as to why they believe the PIFs either did or did not contribute to their vocabulary improvement. All OCS students who state they believe the PIFs do contribute to their vocabulary improvement (ratings of 6 and higher) mention that is because they believe the PIFs exposed them to new words they are now either trying to incorporate or have already incorporated in their general language use. 15 OCS students answer the PIFs do not contribute to their vocabulary improvement because they either forget about the assignment as soon as it is handed in or that they never retained the words. Various reasons for the forgetting of both the assignment and the words in the PIFs are: "No need to practice them [the words]" (O12), "Who would ever go and look at the bloody thing again? I'm sure we all have better things to do." (O3) and "I don't look at them anymore after I have finished them, eventhough I knew I should" (O19). ACS students agree with OCS students that the general reason the PIFs do not facilitate the desired effect is that the assignment and the words in it are forgotten after it is handed in: "The potential fruitful activity of looking up and documenting of unknown words one comes across during reading for other courses usually turns out to become the exercise of actively looking for words last minute that look like one might not have known them at some point, in order to fulfil the quotum of words one needs to pass the assignment" (A2). There are however two ACS students who answer that they believe the PIFs do contribute because they put in the required effort in order for them to be effective. Both questionnaire A6 and A10 mention that they repeat the words in their PIFs and "…look at my PIF from time to time to see whether I still

know most of the words" (A6). It has to be noted that questionnaire A6 has rated PIF enjoyability with a 9.

The next open question offers an opportunity for the students to express their ideas for improvement of the PIFs. Both the OCS and ACS questionnaires provide varied answers.

- How do you think the Personal Idiom Files could be improved?

Seven OCS students are of the opinion that the PIFs need to be abolished or that they cannot be improved. One ACS students agrees with that opinion. Ten of the OCS students suggest that the PIFs should be converted into an active in-class assignment. There should be more teacher support, the teacher should check the PIFs and the PIFs should somehow be revised and tested in class. Amongst the OCS students' suggestions to establish this shift from an autonomous, individual assignment to a class-based, tested and checked assignment we find: "PIFs could be improved if we used them during the classes as well or would be incorperated into the exams" (O18), "Review it more strictly. Some people just pick random words from the dictionary. Rehearse in class maybe?" and "Replace the PIFs as they are now by texts like the ones we have dealt with in class, containing questions about words (families) rather than just looking up the meaning of a word" (O5). Seven ACS students agree that the PIFs should be incorporated in classes.

- Do you find it difficult to find words for your Personal Idiom File?

OCS students' rating of difficulty finding PIF words

ACS students' rating of difficulty finding PIF words
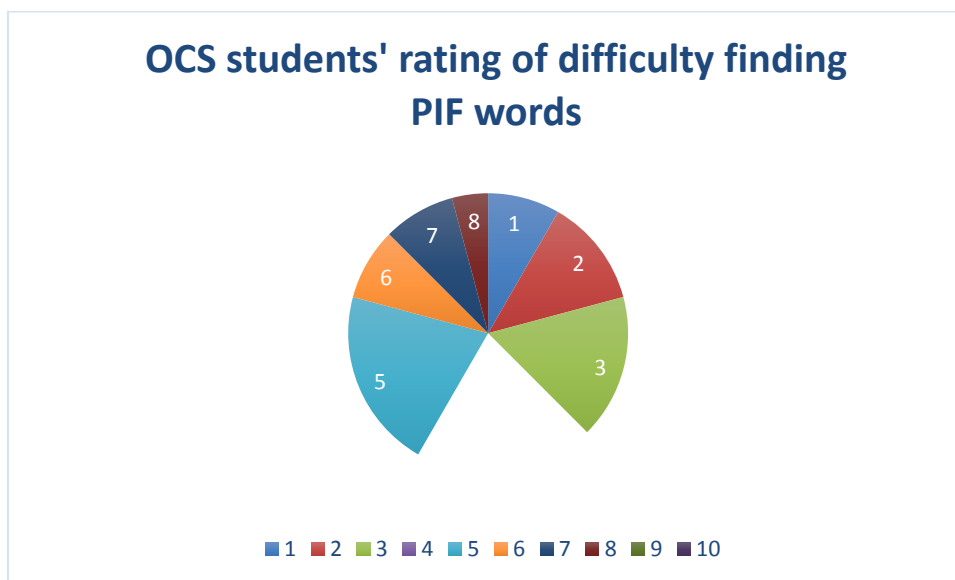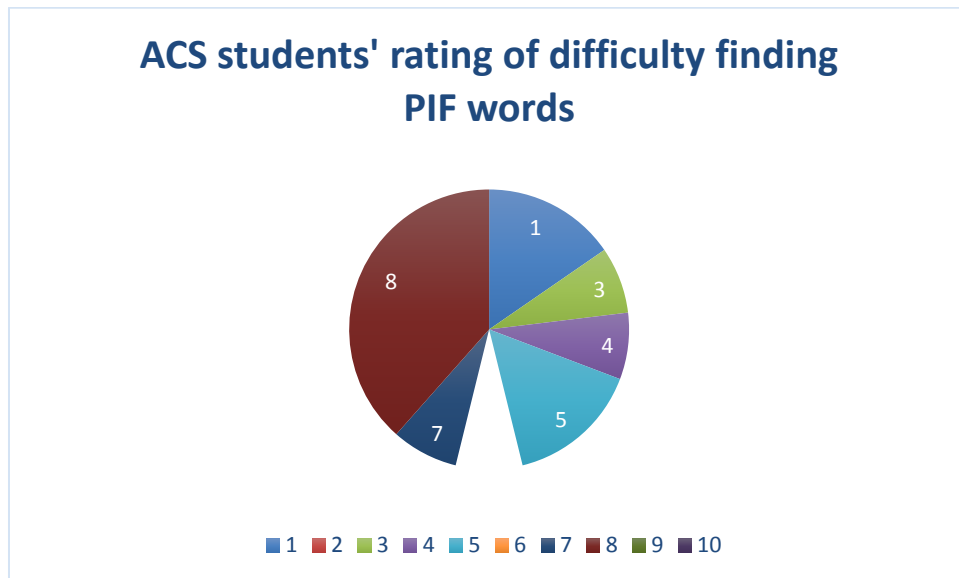
Students' opinions are divided concerning this matter, especially the OCS students' ratings are distributed evenly across the board. The ACS students consent towards a higher rating of difficulty. This question is followed by an open question requesting the students to indicate where they find the words for their PIFs.

- Where do you usually find the words for your Personal Idiom File?

The OCS and ACS students list six different sources for their PIF words. Some student use multiple sources and some restrict themselves to one source only. The most popular source takes the form of online newspaper articles (11 OCS students, 5 ACS students) followed by the second popular source: course material in the form of academic articles of course books (6 OCS students, 10 ACS students). Novels and literature offer a third source (8 OCS students, 5 ACS students). The source of media like television and radio is only mentioned by 3 OCS students. The remaining sources consist of (online) dictionaries (5 OCS students, 1 ACS student) and dedicated websites for finding words (3 OCS students, 1 ACS students). An example of such a dedicated website can be found in questionnaire O22: "Found an "unusual" words reddit [www.reddit.com] page." The questionnaire then shifted to the vocabulary book, which was *Advanced Vocabulary in Use* for OCS students and *Academic Vocabulary in Use* for ACS students.

- Do you like the course book?

OCS students' rating of vocabulary book enjoyability
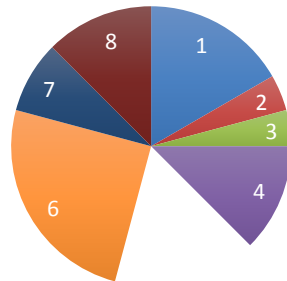
■1 ■2 ■3 ■4 ■5 ■6 ■7 ■8 ■9 ■10

ACS students' rating of vocabulary book enjoyability
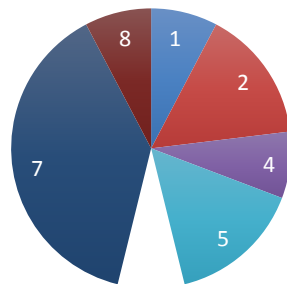
■1 ■2 ■3 ■4 ■5 ■6 ■7 ■8 ■9 ■10

Both the student enjoyability ratings of the OCS and ACS students are distributed across the board. Both a negative and positive opinion is supported by the student group. As with the enjoyability rating on the PIFs, this rating question is backed-up with open questions requesting the students to list a vocabulary book feature they like and do not like.

- What do you like about your course material book?

Sixteen OCS students and five ACS students answer that they perceive the vocabulary book as being well-structured; words are categorized by topics, themes and chapters and they are provided with context in the sense of "…register, word family, related words, etc." (O5). Four OCS students remark that they find the book visually appealing and only three OCS students are of the opinion that there is nothing to like about the vocabulary book. Three OCS students

and four ACS students voice they thought the vocabulary contained in the book is of sufficient quality.

- What don't you like about your course material book?

The book contains too many words and exercises which are also not always provided with proper context or definitions, according to nine OCS students. Seven OCS students add that they find the book and the subsequent assignments and studying to be dull and boring. The remainder of the questionnaires states that the book is perceived as childish, that it is hard to study from or that there are no redeeming features about the book whatsoever. The ACS students do not reach a consensus about what there is to dislike about the vocabulary book. Three ACS students remark they think the vocabulary contained in the book is not relevant enough, two state there are simply too many words, two state the words are not challenging enough and two remark that there is not enough context provided with the vocabulary in the book. The remainder of the ACS students all provide different dislikable features about the vocabulary book. A2 remarks: "I am quite indifferent towards the book, to be perfectly honest. In relation to the study programme English Language and Culture, it is probably too much of an amalgamation of fields of language use and not specific enough when it comes to words we would actually benefit from knowing." And A8 mentions: "The fact that I'm ashamed when I'm learning in the train because it looks like a children's book with all the pictures…" The following question requested the students' opinion on the subsequent test of the vocabulary book.

- What did you think of the last vocabulary test you took based on the course material book?

Eight OCS students and seven ACS students have nothing to report on the last vocabulary test they took, apart from their opinion that it is fine as it was. Eight OCS students mention they do not think the test to be particularly difficult. Four ACS students, however, feel that their test was rather difficult. The further general consensus amongst OCS students and one ACS student is that the test yields too little result for the amount of effort and time they had to put in; the test asks too little vocabulary compared to the vast amount of words they had to study: "I liked the format, but 50 units (~1500 words) is a lot to revise for just one exam" (O16) and "The vocab tests I took were ludicrous. There are probably more than a thousand words per test we had to learn, of which some fifty were asked of us on the test, in quite an obscure way" (A2). In order to make sure students would comment on the actual vocabulary in the vocabulary book and not just on structure and the exercises it contains, for example, the following question was posed:

- What do you think of the word list the course material book provides?

The majority of OCS students (14) think the list was fine. There were also three students who are lost upon the fact that there is actually a word list in the book. The remainder of the students either feel the words to be too many, too simple or too infrequent in everyday conversation. Six ACS students never noticed a word list in their vocabulary book so they do not provide an adequate answer to this question. Two ACS students state the vocabulary was too easy and three ACS students say the list was fine; one of which, A16, answers: "They are useful This year, I have come across a plethora of words that I first learned whilst learning from this book." The next question inquires the students to indicate if they use this vocabulary book word list for anything else but studying for the test.

- What do you use the word list for/do with the word list provided in the course material book?

The students who previously answered they were not aware of the existence of such a list, now either leave the question unanswered or repeat their answer to the previous question. The majority of both OCS (11) and ACS (5) students indicate they only used the list for studying for the test and only 3 OCS students and 1 ACS student state they used or are still using the list for reference and revision: "I look over them at times (when I want to sound smart :D)" (O1) and "I learn the words. Sometimes, I the book as a reference book, looking up words that I know I have forgotten. This is quite unique, however" (A6).

- Did you find it difficult to learn the word list by heart for the test?

ACS students' rating of difficulty for studying for test
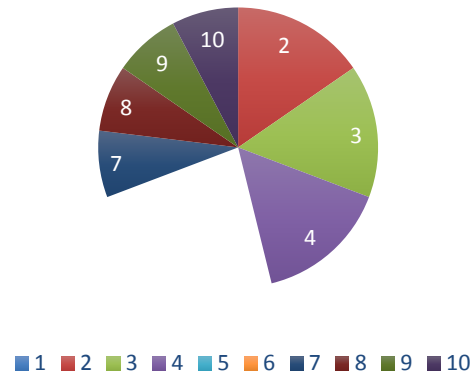
The majority of both OCS and ACS students indicates they did not think studying for the vocabulary test to be hard (ratings of 5 or lower).

- Do you think the Course Material Book helped you improve your vocabulary?

OCS students' perceived CMB contribution to vocabulary improvement
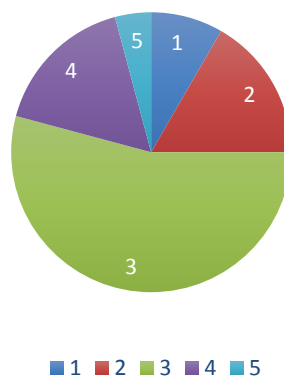
ACS students' perceived CMB contribution to vocabulary improvement

■1 ■2 ■3 ■4 ■5
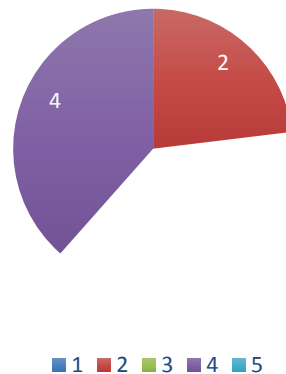
Students' opinions are evenly distributed with the majority of students rating their perceived vocabulary book contribution to their vocabulary improvement as average. This rating question is backed-up by an open question requesting the students to explain their ratings. The OCS students who are of the opinion that the vocabulary book does improve their vocabulary primarily illustrate their opinion with the reason that they retain the words they were required to study for the test. The other opinion is that students believe they have improved their vocabulary because the words are provided in context in the book: "The words were often used in contexts, so you could imagine the word being used (and I did tend to use them!)" (O1). The general consensus as of why the ACS students who think the vocabulary book has contributed to their vocabulary improvement thought it had been effective is that the vocabulary the book has provided them with is considered to be useful: "There were for instance words you could specifically use for making essays, which proved to be very useful" (A11) and "Especially academic jargon was still pretty much unknown to me. This book filled that gap" (A6). The majority of both OCS and ACS students who indicate they think the vocabulary book has not or has contributed little to their vocabulary improvement state that the main reason for that is that they could not or did not retain the vocabulary provided. Two ACS students add that they felt the vocabulary was too easy and was therefore already present in both their active and passive knowledge: "… much of the material was quite useless to me as a serious, academically minded student" (A2) and "My vocabulary was already extensive, so I did not learn by heart either the English Vocabulary or Academic Vocabulary" (A7). The questionnaire than required the students to describe their perfect vocabulary test.

- Could you describe your ideal vocabulary test?

Five OCS students simply state they could not, two OCS students state they thought the tests were fine as they are, three OCS students want to abolish vocabulary testing all together and two OCS students repeat their opinion that they thought the vocabulary test of the vocabulary book should contain more of the vocabulary in the book to make up for the vast amount of studying. Other suggestions are to change the vocabulary test into an oral test or to incorporate the PIF words. Five ACS students also say they thought tests did not need to be modified, one ACS student wants to abolish vocabulary testing as well and two ACS students are of the opinion that vocabulary acquisition is implicit and therefore should not be tested or taught: "No test at all; let vocabulary use and eloquence do their jobs of either or not becoming intrinsic to a person's use of English in a more organic way, namely in the process of the written and spoken assignments of other courses, as well as oral communication exercises during the OCS and ACS courses" (A2) and "Probably the same as it is, because that is the easiest way to test vocab. The problem is that vocab acquisition should be an ongoing process instead of a task with an end goal" (A9). The following questions ask the students to estimate what percentage of the vocabulary they had to study from the vocabulary book have actually been retained passively and/or actively.

- Can you estimate what percentage of all the words in the list provided by the Course Material book you can still recognize and recall today?
- Can you estimate what percentage of all the words in the list provided by the Course Material Book you still use today in your everyday speech once in a while?

Perceived amount of retained words from course book in % by OCS students

Perceived amount of retained course book words in % by ACS students
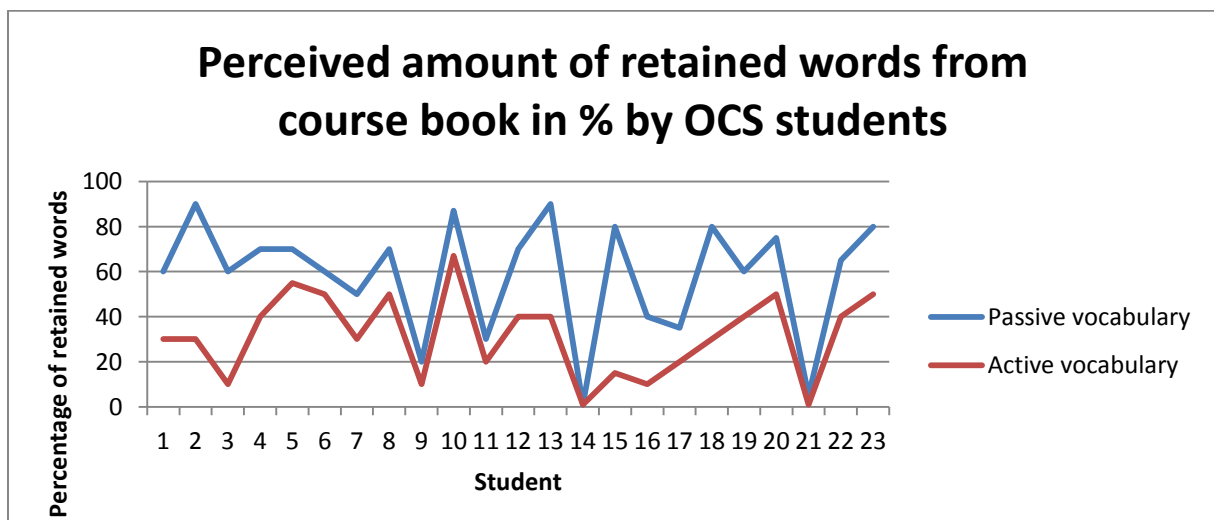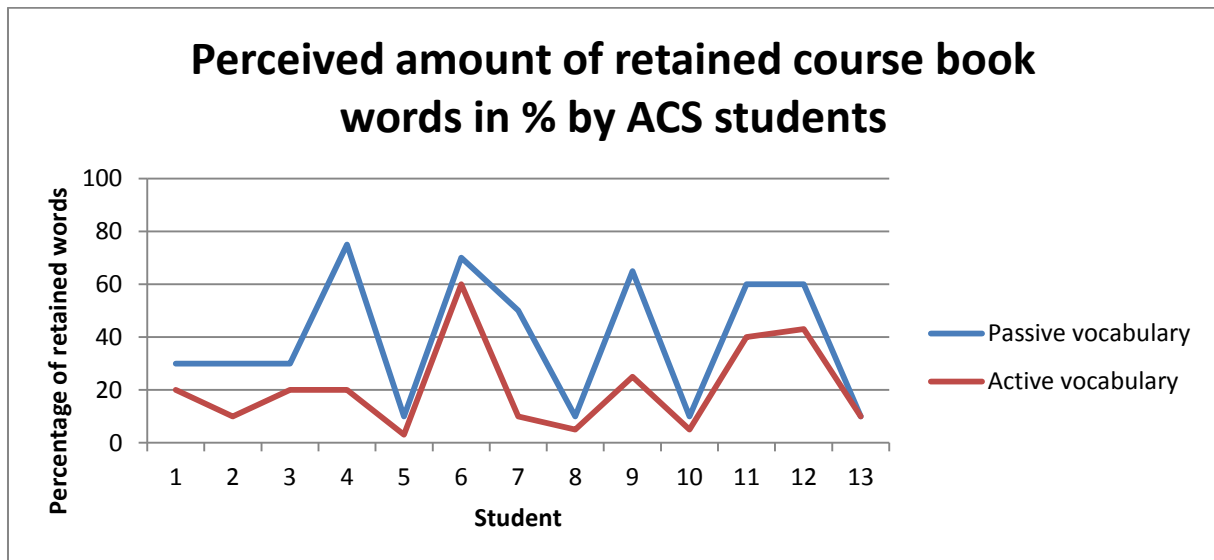
There is consistency in students indicating that they retained more words passively than actively. Some indicate there is a larger gap between the two than others. OCS students estimate that they retained an average percentage of 58% passively and an average percentage of 31.6% actively. ACS students estimate that they retained an average percentage of 40.8% passively and an average percentage of 24% actively. As a final question the questionnaire offers the students the opportunity to leave any comments they like.

- Have you got any further comments about any subject regarding vocabulary teaching and learning in the English Language and Culture study?

Thirteen OCS students and four ACS students indicate that they have no further comments and four OCS students have drawn a picture of an item entirely unrelated to the topic of the questionnaire. Five OCS students do leave additional comments which all pertain the suggestion of incorporating active vocabulary teaching in class more prominently. Two ACS students agree with that opinion but the majority of ACS students who do leave a comment voices that they believe vocabulary acquisition is an implicit process that cannot be taught to begin with: "Root [sic] learning vocabulary is a necessary evil. Learning English through music lyrics, English subtitles and reading is much more fun but perhaps takes longer" (A7) and "All in all, vocab is obviously an important factor in academic use of English, but learning it should be a more organic process, rather than studying it actively from a book for a test. I obviously can't speak for everybody, but I doubt there are many students who feel their vocabularies have actively and drastically improved in consequence of the way learning and teaching vocab is handled during their English Language and Culture studies" (A2).

Results: group discussion

An OCS class of eighteen students participated in a semi-structured group discussion with me about the topics of vocabulary acquisition, learning and teaching. The questionnaires had not been processed yet so students were free to speak anonymously. The group discussion lasted ten minutes, its ended because class time was over and students were eager to get going. Questions posed to the student group were questions to provide elaboration on topics discussed in the questionnaires. An overview of the questions asked along with their answers can be found below:

- What did you guys think of the questionnaire?

It was fine, students felt it covered everything there is to cover about vocabulary acquisition, learning and teaching within the English Language and Culture department.

- Do you feel like the Personal Idiom Files help you improve your vocabulary?

The student group felt they do not work because they take too much time to complete. Students indicate they often complete the weekly assignment the day in advance which requires them to find their new Personal Idiom File words all in one go within a relatively short amount of time. Students also remark they do not remember the words they wrote down in their Personal Idiom Files because they never look at it again. They feel the PIF assignment is too detached from the rest of the OCS program.

- Do you feel like the vocabulary test subsequent to AViU helped you improve your vocabulary?

Students agree the vocabulary test did help them improve their vocabulary. It was a lot of work to study for and a few indicate they thought the test too difficult to pass. The general consensus is that the test did not improve the students' vocabulary because the words were not used for anything else but the test.

- Do your teachers dedicate class time to explicit vocabulary teaching?

The student group indicates that they notice the teachers' struggle with vocabulary teaching. They illustrate this by mentioning multiple examples of vocabulary assignments they were exposed to in class by different teachers. These examples existed out of an assignment called text mining, which consisted of 'mining' through a text in order to locate words the students might not know yet and an assignment in the form of short plays in class that were to be acted by the students and contained new vocabulary words. The students were positive about the text mining assignment but would abolish the vocabulary plays if they had the chance.

Two students wonder if vocabulary acquisition is maybe something that just happens and needs to be left alone in order for it to improve. They do not believe vocabulary teaching can be effective in any way imaginable.

Students are also adamant about the large portion of OCS class time that is dedicated to presentations and discussions. They feel classes are primarily filled with listening to peer presentations and relatively little individual speaking time. They are also voicing their concern for the low level of participation they experience in class discussion. This problem extends beyond the OCS classroom since the students indicate the participation level is even lower with discussions for other courses.

The short amount of time available restricted the amount of questions that could be asked to the students to elaborate on. The questions that were answered yielded no new results. Other than the consensus that students are aware of the struggle the OCS teachers have with vocabulary teaching.

Triangulation of results

The following chapter contains the summaries of the results yielded by the teacher interviews and student questionnaires followed by a conclusion that presents the overall conclusion to this needs analysis based on the triangulated summaries of both stakeholder groups. Students rate their own vocabulary proficiency between a 6 and 8 with the exception of one 9, which is a high rating. They also indicate they do want to improve their vocabulary. Since the start of their English Language and Culture studies, they do feel like they improved already, which is mostly due to their own efforts and contributions than it is because of the contribution classes and courses make, although only by the narrowest of margins.

Considering the vocabulary teaching strategies deployed in class, the students are least positive about the Personal Idiom Files. The general opinion is very negative because the students feel the assignment and the words they collect are easily forgotten about and not particularly useful in everyday life. This is mostly because the assignment does not carry enough weight, is not checked by the teacher and not incorporated in classes. The students that do think the PIFs contribute to their vocabulary improvement mention that they believe that is because they put in the individual effort required. The opinions on how difficult it is to find words for PIFs are divided. Sources where students find their words are novels, news articles, course material, dedicated websites, television and radio, and dictionaries.

There is no general consensus on the enjoyability of the vocabulary book. The structure is generally perceived as likable but the book also contains too many words and studying is considered dull and boring. The test was also too much work for too little result although there is also the general opinion that studying for the test was not very hard. Students who indicate they believe the vocabulary book and the subsequent test did contribute to their vocabulary improvement say that is because the vocabulary stuck with them after the test. Students who indicate the test and vocabulary book did not contribute to their vocabulary improvement say the opposite: that they did not retain the vocabulary.

Most students do not have a clear opinion on what exactly their perfect vocabulary test would look like. The few that do either remark that there should be no test at all, that vocabulary learning is implicit and therefore cannot be tested, that the current way of testing is fine or that the PIF words should be incorporated in the vocabulary test. The final question that left the students the opportunity to make any remarks they felt were necessary yielded the general suggestion that vocabulary teaching either needs to be actively incorporated in class more or that vocabulary acquisition is implicit and cannot be taught; it just happens.

Teachers agree that vocabulary acquisition is a process that primarily needs to be exercised by students autonomously and independently. There is also the consensus that students do not show the competence needed to pick up such a task. This is mainly because of the student's attitude towards vocabulary acquisition which is an attitude of a lack of natural curiosity, seeing passing tests and courses as the ultimate goal of the learning process, being too easily persuaded to believe their language use is good enough as it is and not feeling responsible for their own learning process. The feel that in order to solve this problem, more class time should be dedicated to explicit vocabulary teaching in class and student support but that there is no such time available because of a tight OCS and ACS program that mainly exists out of extensive student presentations and class discussions.

The results of the teacher interviews offer deeper insights as to why the students filled in the questionnaires the way they did. Students rate their own vocabulary proficiency rather high, which is illustrated by the teachers explaining that students are too easily persuaded that their current language use is good enough. The PIFs form the biggest problem according to the students because they do not achieve the desired effect. Words are not retained and the assignment is not considered to be of enough importance for students to put in the effort required. The interviews contain similar information in the form of teachers indicating they believe student are more focussed on passing tests than learning for the sake of learning.

Students then call for more active class incorporation of the PIFs, stricter checking by the teachers or an abolishment of PIFs all together. All three statements are illustrated by the teachers indicating that students do not have the cognitive ability to take full responsibility for the PIF process that requires effort and independence. The mentality of passing tests as a first priority is also reflected in the students remarking that studying for the vocabulary test as a result of the vocabulary book takes up too much time and effort for too little result. The lack of responsibility for their own vocabulary acquisition process also shows through the students' opinion that vocabulary testing should be abolished because vocabulary learning is implicit and 'just happens'. Both teachers and students agree that vocabulary teaching should be incorporated more actively in class and teachers add that that goal is eluded by class presentations and discussions that currently take up too much time.

Below is a table presenting the key points students provided teamed with key points the teachers voiced.

Personal Idiom Files	
Students:	*Teachers:*
Too much work	Studying for exams instead of studying for sake of acquiring knowledge
Too little reward	
Don't remember the words I put in	
Am never asked to use the words again	
Not incorporated in anything	
I don't ever look at it again	Lack of autonomy/No time in class
Teachers don't check	
Academic Vocabulary in Use, Advanced English Vocabulary in Use	
Students:	*Teachers:*
Generally ok	Generally ok
Vocabulary exam	
Students:	*Teachers:*
Too much work	Studying for exams instead of studying for sake of acquiring knowledge
Too little reward	
Test doesn't cover enough material from the book	
Boring	Lack of natural curiosity
Self-perception	
Students:	*Teachers:*
Current proficiency self-rating of 7	Easily persuaded no improvement is necessary (noticing the gap)
Improvement in vocabulary mostly due to own contribution	

This conclusion to the needs analyses provides me with information on which to build implementations for future conduct in the OCS and ACS classroom. The Personal Idiom Files, students' mentality of studying for study points and grades instead of learning for the

sake of personal development and class time being consumed by class presentations and discussions will be my primary focus. Before this thesis can yield any form of valid implementation for the future, an extensive analysis of the current academic developments and knowledge already collected on vocabulary acquisition, learning and teaching needs to be formed. The following chapter contains the theoretical foundation on which, in combination with the needs analysis, further suggestions for future OCS and ACS conduct will be made.

Chapter III: Theoretical Framework

The practical and concrete purpose of this thesis will result in a series of implementations and ideas concerning vocabulary acquisition teaching within the English department of the Radboud University in Nijmegen. I will investigate what the academic world already knows about vocabulary, vocabulary acquisition and vocabulary teaching and I will determine which of those implementations are applicable to the current situation at Radboud University. Since the needs analysis previously described has indicated that the Personal Idiom Files and students' mentality pose the biggest hurdles to overcome, both topics can be found in the theoretical foundation as well. The consulted literature is quite dated (primarily in the 90s and early 2000s). The reason for this is that the majority of academic progression in the area of vocabulary teaching, acquisition and learning has been established during that period and this theoretical groundwork has since then been accepted as the status quo.

Implicit vs. explicit learning and incidental vs. formal learning

There are two types of learning that are not only applicable to vocabulary acquisition, but basically to learning in general. The distinction between implicit and explicit learning is one that stands at the cradle of education. This thesis focuses on implicit and explicit learning of a language. Implicit learning is acquiring knowledge of a language via a natural process that has not been shaped for the goal of knowledge increase (Ellis, 2015). To elaborate; an example of implicit learning would be a Dutch teenager who plays an online game during which he or she would have to communicate with English players regularly. He or she would practise his or her English but would not play the game with the purpose of gaining knowledge of a language. It might even be that the teenager does not notice his or her English improving as a result. Explicit learning is a conscious operation during which the learning process has been shaped for the goal of gaining knowledge and thus often results in the intake of artificial input (Ellis, 2015). An example of explicit learning would be studying for a test or reading an instruction book for a course or class.

Then there is the second distinction I need to identify: incidental versus formal learning. Implicit and explicit learning have to do with the characteristics of the received input whilst incidental and formal learning have to do with the intention of the learner. Incidental learning happens when the learner does not have the intention to learn but does so anyway. An example of a learning process that is both incidental and implicit is a young child picking up on his or her L1 via the social environment around the child whilst growing up (Hulstijn, 1989). Formal learning is "typically institutionally sponsored, classroom-based, and highly

structured" (Marsick & Watkins, 2001). An example of formal and explicit learning would be a student attending class about grammatical structures in order to improve his or her grammatical knowledge and use of the language at hand. The difference in intention also means a shift in learning responsibility. Formal learning suggests that the conveyer and designer of the input is the facilitator of the student's learning process whilst incidental learning (informal) asks for more autonomy on the part of the student. They need to look for and acquire useful input themselves (Marsick & Watkins, 2001).

Why are these distinctions relevant for this master thesis? In order to redesign and analyse vocabulary teaching appropriately and correctly, one needs to keep in mind which type of language learning (explicit or implicit and incidental or formal) is favourable. Additionally, theoretical underpinnings of vocabulary acquisition need to be clear in order to facilitate a sensible discussion. Do students benefit from vocabulary teaching that is aimed at explicit acquisition? Or is it better to try to stimulate the vocabulary acquisition process as implicitly and incidentally as possible? Schmitt offers an answer to this inquiry: "(…) explicit and incidental learning are the two approaches to vocabulary acquisition." He states that explicit learning yields the best chance of language improvement because it devotes so much time and direct attention to the language material at hand. The time devotion is also the problem that arises with explicit learning; no student or teacher has the time to learn or teach a giant and advanced lexicon explicitly. Incidental learning makes for a more efficient use of time since it happens during reading, speaking, listening or just general exposure to an L2 environment. The problem with incidental learning is that it is not controlled and a gradual process that is often slow (Schmitt, 2000). On top of that, incidental vocabulary learning is dependent on frequent (incidental) input and it could take quite a while to acquire enough instances of exposure in order to completely acquire a word.

Usage frequency in language learning

Implicit versus explicit language learning aside, language learning is dependent on (usage) frequency. Below is an excerpt taken from one of Ellis' articles about frequency effects:

> Language learning is the associative learning of representations that reflect the probabilities of occurrence of form-function mappings. Frequency is thus a key determinant of acquisition because "rules" of language, at all level of analysis

(from phonology, through syntax, to discourse), are structural regularities that

emerge from learners' lifetime analysis of the distributional characteristics of the

language input. Learners have to *figure* language out. (Ellis, 2002).

In other words; because language learning is a process of development that takes time, exposure to frequent input of the same item is vital. As Hulstijn remarked in his article, a child learning an L1 language is largely (if not completely) dependent on incidental and implicit language learning. The child needs frequent and natural input. L2 vocabulary learning is, apart from the explicit classroom-based learning, also largely dependent on incidental usage and/or exposure as stated in the previous section.

Reading offers a great source of incidental input but in order to gain incidental knowledge from a text, a student needs to "reach a vocabulary size threshold" (Schmitt, 2000). This has two reasons; the first being that in order to be able to read an L2 text to begin with, the student needs adequate knowledge of the language. This initial knowledge is traditionally gained via explicit (and often formal) methods. The second reason is that the student needs a certain L2 vocabulary level in order to derive the meaning of unknown words through the meaning of words the reader does know (Schmitt, 2000).

And then there is the matter of how high the exposure frequency needs to be in order for the student to completely acquire a word incidentally. Previous research has shown that students start to acquire a word as receptive knowledge after six times of exposure on different occasions in reading. Only the learners with the higher aptitude for language learning also retained these words as productive knowledge (Rott, 1998) whilst other research points towards an exposure rate between 5 to 16 times (Nation, 1990). Recent research, however, has indicated that it is not as simple as determining a rate of exposure and that retention of a word has more to do with other aspects such as salience of a word in context (Brown, 1993), the learner's interest and initial size and quality of his or her vocabulary knowledge (Laufer & Hadar, 1997; Nation & Hwang, 1995). There is research that suggest combining incidental exposure with explicit enhancement in order to yield the best results. If students explicitly acquire the meaning of an unknown word as soon as they incidentally encounter it by using a dictionary or by being provided with a marginal glossary, they enhance the word-meaning connection and therefore retain it more easily than without explicit additional information. Students that do not have this additional information on meaning often even skip over a word that they do not know because they can derive textual meaning from context and no retaining at all is achieved (Hulstijn et al., 1996).

So one cannot do without the other. Whilst language learning and vocabulary acquisition is largely dependent on incidental and frequent exposure, the student needs explicit input in order to be able to even begin the incidental acquisition process and results are significantly better when the incidental is backed up by explicit enhancement; both provided by teachers teaching language explicitly, and students engaging actively and explicitly in self studying and practise. A combination of the two seems to be the best option to go with. Many vocabulary teaching techniques already put this combination of explicit and incidental vocabulary acquisition into practice. The following sections will describe and define various well-known vocabulary teaching techniques that have proven to be effective or ineffective. But first; the basis of language learning.

Schmitt's Eleven Principles of Language Learning

Linguists Diane and Norbert Schmitt drew up a set of principles that should guide all qualitative language learning which were presented in the Schmitt & Schmitt article "Vocabulary Notebooks: Theoretical Underpinnings and Practical Suggestion" (1995). This section will outline these principles so that they can be used as guidelines throughout the rest of this thesis since it will observe and criticize the current state of vocabulary learning at the English Department at Radboud University and will result in suggestions for improvement.

1. *"The best way to remember new words is to incorporate them into language that is already known."*

As was established before, 'to know a word' means to know every aspect of that word, including connotations and its place within lexemes. To incorporate new words into language that is already known provides the student with context from which he or she can derive meaning. Teachers can present new words in context during class activities so that they are incorporated in the class materials and automatically transferred to students attending class. Moreover, students have the possibility of actively incorporating new words into their own daily language use or practices in order to produce as high a usage frequency as possible.

2. *"Organized material is easier to learn."*

Remembering words and their meaning (and all other information as well) becomes easier if the words are organized in memorable patterns. Again, this concrete arrangement of vocabulary input can be facilitated by teachers when presenting materials to the students, but students can also organize materials themselves.

3. *"Words that are very similar should not be taught at the same time."*

The student's brain creates new associations with new words that will help him or her to retain the meaning and form. If two words are very much alike in form and/or meaning, or even in function alone, the brain can confuse new associations which will complicate retaining the new words for a long time after the learning was completed. A side note in the article remarks that although this might sound obvious, similar words are often taught at the same time because it gives an organized impression, which adheres to principle 2, but despite that effect, similar words in functional meaning should be avoided (e.g. *left* and *right*).

4. *"Word pairs can be used to learn a great number of words in a short time."*

Word pairs (as in; native word paired with the L2 target word) provide both organisation and context at the same time and that aids students in their vocabulary acquisition. Schmitt & Schmitt (1995) does call for caution; although word pairs offer a chance of great initial exposure to new language, they do not make for an effective learning technique for trying to embed words as reproductive knowledge.

5. *"Knowing a word entails more than just knowing its meaning."*

As Nation (1990) contained as well, knowing a word means much more than just knowing its meaning(s). To know a word means that you are familiar with every aspect of the word in the sense of its grammatical use, its orthographical form, its meaning(s), its pronunciation, its semantic connotations and its appropriateness. Common rote learning based solely on word pairs currently serves as a popular vocabulary enhancement technique in secondary schools, which violates this principle.

6. *"The deeper the mental processing used when learning a word, the more likely that a student will remember it."*

When a student devotes more time to actively trying to store a word, such as the application of deeper mental processes like creating a mental image or trying to use the word in a correct sentence, it becomes easier to retain and recall. These mental processes are the opposite of repetitive rote learning. The application of previous principles 1, 2 and 4 offer an opportunity to deeper mental processing for students: organizing material, thinking of ways to incorporate new words in known language and looking for word pairs.

7. *"The act of recalling a word will make it more likely that a learner will be able to recall it later again."*

Despite the desirable effect that recalling, which is a deeper mental process, has (principle 6), it also helps the student to familiarize the word as productive knowledge and will make recalling the word later on easier.

8.   *"Learners must pay close attention in order to learn most effectively."*
Incidental vocabulary learning has its merits, but the best results are achieved when a learner is completely and explicitly focused on the purpose of learning language.

9.   *"Words need to be recycled to be learnt."*
A learner should be exposed to a word various times before it sticks and after that, this ninth principle tells us that the word needs to be repeated as productive knowledge as well in order to be retained.

10.   *"An efficient recycling method: the 'expanding rehearsal'.*
Research has shown that the loss of learned materials occurs mostly right after the learning process was completed. So the 'expanding rehearsal' method implies that students should recycle the learned material right after the learning session was completed and should then recycle at increasing intervals.

11.   *"Learners are individuals and have different learning styles."*
Vocabulary teaching asks for customized learning and teaching processes as well. No two students react in the very same way to the same input. This principle also confirms that vocabulary enhancement is to be partially completed by students in an autonomous and individual manner so that they themselves can aid their own, personal learning style and process.

Passive vs. active vocabulary

I would like to present a quote spoken by the late Robin Williams in the film *Dead Poets Society*. It was later captured in written form by N.H. Kleinbaum in the homonymous novel:

> "So avoid using the word 'very' because it's lazy. A man is not very tired, he is exhausted. Don't use very sad, use morose. Language was invented for one reason, boys - to woo women - and, in that endeavor, laziness will not do."

As indicated by the teacher interviews; students tend to think "that will do". Why would we dive into words like "morose" for sadness and "ecstatic" as a substitute for happiness if the simpler "very sad" or "very happy" would do?

The most basic division between active (productive) and passive (receptive) vocabulary is one based on different language skills. Actively using a word during speaking or writing means that it belongs to one's active vocabulary and recognizing a word whilst listening or reading refers to ones passive vocabulary (Nation, 1990; Nemati, 2010). It is,

however, more complex than that. The distinction Nation offers suggests that passive and active vocabulary are two separate sets of vocabulary knowledge accessed with whatever language skill the user needs in any given situation and one could even go as far as to derive from it that there exists a one to one relationship between passive and active vocabulary. Laufer offers us an interesting angle to this relationship. He claims that every actively used word is also present in the user's passive vocabulary because in order to use it correctly, one needs to recognize, recall and understand it. The opposite, however, cannot be claimed as the truth. One can comprehend a word in reading or listening, or even in its isolated spoken form, but can be unable to use it correctly in conversation (1998). This suggests that a learner's passive vocabulary range is substantially bigger than his or her active vocabulary range whilst the opposite is highly unlikely (or even impossible). The challenge for teachers of English as a foreign or second language is to bridge this gap between the two vocabulary types and convert the passive knowledge of vocabulary into equally big knowledge (and therefore use) of the active type.

Having a large passive vocabulary range is very useful to the learner. Previous studies have established a minimum passive vocabulary range that second language learners need to acquire before they can adequately comprehend written texts and pedagogical input. Laufer suggested a minimum of 3,000 word families and 5,000 lexical items (i.e. both single word and lexemes) for students of English as a second or foreign language (1992). Other studies have since then challenged this claim and more research is currently necessary to arrive at a rough estimate of the exact numbers. Qian does suggest that these numbers should be higher (2006). Whatever the exact numbers might be, reading comprehension rests on a passive vocabulary of a substantial size.

Laufer hands us a term that is perfect for the explanation of why a large active vocabulary (and with that the bridge between the two areas) is so important. "Free productive knowledge (…) has to do with the use of words at one's free will, without any specific prompts for particular words" (1998).

Schmitt's Vocabulary Learning Strategies Taxonomy

Schmitt (1997) has devoted a large part of his research on vocabulary acquisition to the formation of his Vocabulary Learning Strategies Taxonomy. This taxonomy is a compilation of vocabulary learning strategies categorized by type. There are six different categories:

1. Determination strategies:

These strategies involve the discovering of new words and guessing its meaning by (L1) context. Examples would be guessing from textual context, analyzing affixes and roots and checking for L1 cognates.

2. Determination social strategies:

These strategies are formed around the principle of asking someone who knows. This category includes asking a teacher or a classmate for L1 translations.

3. Consolidation social strategies:

Strategies that employ group work with peers as the basis of vocabulary learning. Examples of these strategies would be interacting with native speakers or studying and practicing in a group of peers.

4. Memory strategies:

All strategies concerned with remembering words as an individual student. There are many memory strategies, a few of which are: grouping, using pictures/imagery and using related words.

5. Cognitive strategies

Strategies like rote learning or repetition. Examples could be verbal or written repetition, flash cards or vocabulary notebooks. The Personal Idiom Files that are practiced during both OCS and ACS classes belong to this category. The cognitive character of cognitive strategies implies that deeper, cognitive engagement is vital for the effectiveness of these vocabulary learning strategies.

6. Metacognitive strategies

These strategies are based on the parameter that students are aware of their learning process and are optimizing their strategies to their individual needs by, for example, testing oneself with vocabulary tests, skipping words that are already known or are too far advanced or using English media for additional exposure.

This taxonomy offers a good basis from which to pick existing vocabulary learning strategies to explore further. The following sections each discuss a vocabulary learning/teaching strategy that is promising for the purpose of this thesis. They have not necessarily been taken out of the Vocabulary Learning Strategies Taxonomy but have been deemed applicable for this master thesis.

Personal Idiom Files

Personal idiom files, or vocabulary notebooks, are a popular manner of enhancing vocabulary acquisition and are widely believed to be effective as means of additional exposure (Schmitt & Schmitt, 1995; Allen, 1983; McCarthy, 1990). Walters & Bozkurt (2009) provides us with the definition for vocabulary notebooks: a personal dictionary where "the learner records the words they encounter, along with their meanings and any other aspects of the word deemed important, such as part of speech, other word forms, collocates, synonyms, antonyms, and perhaps a context sentence." This educational tool has two main aims; the primary aim is to boost the learner's vocabulary acquisition process and the secondary aim is to promote student autonomy (McCrostie, 2007; Fowle, 2002; Schmitt & Schmitt, 2000).

Let's first discuss this primary aim. McCrostie (2007) determined that vocabulary notebooks might not have the desired effect on vocabulary learning. Although it is a relatively easy method to implement into existing educational programs because teachers do not have to devote much time in the classroom to it (Fowle, 2002), teacher guidance is needed in order to make the vocabulary notebooks effective acquisition tools. The problem lies with word selection. McCrostie (2007) identifies that students consider all unknown words to be of 'equal value.' They do not take frequency rates into account and fill their vocabulary notebooks with words that they either encountered once in class or are rarely exposed to in course material. The result being that the notebooks get filled with words they will rarely see again and/or with words that do not improve productive vocabulary knowledge since the words are so infrequent and specific to certain topics. So the vocabulary notebook's primary aim is only met if a teacher spends enough time guiding the students through the word selection process and if the students engages actively in finding the right words for their Personal Idiom File.

The secondary aim has yielded more promising results (McCrostie, 2007); Schmitt & Schmitt, 2000). Fowle (2002) concluded that the vocabulary notebooks exposed the students to learning techniques and strategies and student autonomy. More recent research has, however, indicated that vocabulary notebooks might not be as effective for promoting learner autonomy as was as of yet presumed. Empirical evidence has been found for the improvement of vocabulary as a result of using vocabulary notebooks (primary aim) but has not been found for the increase of student autonomy and independence (Walters & Bozkurt, 2009).

Rote Learning

Perhaps the most popular vocabulary learning technique amongst secondary school students at home is rote learning. This definition: "Rote learning is a method involving repetition and memorization" (Moore, 2000) is perhaps the kindest I was able to find. Rote learning is mostly a discredited method and that is noticeable in the definitions linguist have drawn up: rote learning is "a mechanical way without thought or meaning" (Biggs, 1997) and "a RL system does not involve any processes which enable the learner to understand or interpret the information learnt" (Li, 2004). Rote learning has to do with surface retention and not so much with deeper understanding. It is therefore a good technique to use when initially studying the alphabet and number patterns. Empirical research has indicated that rote learning and critical learning (applying deeper understanding) initially yield the same results when it comes to overnight retention of words. The real difference in success arises long term: deeper understanding leads to better productive knowledge and to long term retention whilst rote learning more often leads to loss of recall over time (Hilgard et al, 1953).

But if it is so disapproved of, why do teachers and vocabulary book writers in the Netherland so often advocate it as the absolute way in which to study for vocabulary tests and, thus, enhance vocabulary? There are complete computer-assisted language learning systems devoted to rote learning (such as wrts and anki). There is nothing wrong with repetition because it adheres to Schmitt's ninth principle of language learning but it violates all the others. Students are more or less forced to deploy rote learning as a means of achieving passes on vocabulary tests with relatively short periods to study for.

Noticing and Awareness

All previous information in this theoretical background has been aimed at linguistics and/or teaching techniques. There is, however, a different angle to vocabulary teaching that needs attention. So far, this thesis has presented vocabulary acquisition at the micro-level; exploring inherent learning processes and discovering popular teaching techniques. It is now time to look at learning at its meta-level.

There are two terms that I would like to define in this final section of the theoretical framework; *noticing* and *awareness*. The original definition of noticing is aimed at input: "the intake of grammar [and other language aspects] as a result of learners paying conscious attention to input" (Lynch, 2001). But Lynch (2001) believes that noticing is just as applicable to output as well. Tony Lynch practices the classroom technique 'proof-listening' with his own students. It is about students recording, listening to and eventually reviewing their own

speech in order to notice what they did well, what they need to improve and therefore 'noticing' what characterizes their own personal output and what subsequently is required of them in the area of speech improvement. This kind of noticing is also called *noticing the gap* for which the 'gap' is what aspect of their language use still needs to be improved by the student (Thornbury, 1997). Schmitt (1990) identifies that all noticing results into learning intake. The practices of peer reviewing and class feedback do a great deal for noticing. It is perhaps more important that students notice their own speech at an individual level. Some students do not have the aptitude for language and they still need to notice their own linguistic gap. As Lynch (2001) remarked; only the people with the highest aptitude for language notice their own gap without encouragement or guiding.

There is another aspect of noticing that is perhaps even more valuable for this thesis: raising awareness, or the acquisition of metalinguistic knowledge. According to Cross (2002), noticing the gap is preceded by consciousness raising and acquiring metalinguistic knowledge. Consciousness raising is the "drawing of learners' attention to the formal properties of language" (Rutherford et al., 1985). This process might not directly result into language acquisition, but it supports all further SLA processes (Ellis, 1994). Metalinguistic knowledge (such as L1 to L2 transfer, and especially for vocabulary learning: passive vs. active vocabulary, frequency exposure and incidental and explicit learning, etc.) can help students with an aptitude for language develop a more solid sense of why learning is important and what is necessary to improve their input.

Conclusion

Despite all this elaborate knowledge on vocabulary acquisition, teaching and learning, how is it possible that the students of the English department at Radboud University still do not graduate with the promised level of C2 vocabulary range and control? Should not Schmitt's Eleven Principles of Language Learning backed up with all further information on metalinguistic vocabulary acquisition provide the teachers and staff of the English department with adequate foundation to build practical teaching techniques on? Something is wrong somewhere between the theoretical application on paper and the concrete, practical execution we see in the OCS and ACS class rooms.

It seems that the combination of explicit and incidental learning lends itself best for effective vocabulary acquisition. That is; explicit learning done by the student and explicit teaching provided by the teacher. The student needs to actively engage in the explicit learning process and put in the effort and attention required in order for it to be effective. The Personal

Idiom Files provide an example of a tried and tested vocabulary learning strategy that is currently deployed in the OCS and ACS classroom. This strategy is contained in Schmitt's Vocabulary Learning Strategy Taxonomy and its concept adheres to five of Schmitt's Principles of Language Learning. The Personal Idiom Files in both concept and execution adhere to ten out of eleven Principles of Language Learning if the student puts in the active engagement and attention required.

Chapter IV: Theory applied

The needs analysis yielded the following results:

Personal Idiom Files	
Students:	*Teachers:*
Too much work	Studying for exams instead of studying for sake of acquiring knowledge
Too little reward	
Don't remember the words I put in	
Am never asked to use the words again	
Not incorporated in anything	
I don't ever look at it again	Lack of autonomy/No time in class
Teachers don't check	
Academic Vocabulary in Use, Advanced English Vocabulary in Use	
Students:	*Teachers:*
Generally ok	Generally ok
Vocabulary exam	
Students:	*Teachers:*
Too much work	Studying for exams instead of studying for sake of acquiring knowledge
Too little reward	
Test doesn't cover enough material from the book	
Boring	Lack of natural curiosity
Self-perception	
Students:	*Teachers:*
Current proficiency self-rating of 7	Easily persuaded no improvement is necessary (noticing the gap)
Improvement in vocabulary mostly due to own contribution	

The following chapter triangulates these findings with the theoretical framework that was constructed before.

Personal Idiom Files

Personal Idiom Files need more explicit attention, both from teachers in the classroom and from students within their own individual situation. As was deduced from the paragraph on vocabulary notebooks; PIFs are only effective if appropriate words are chosen by the students, if the students puts in the required cognitive engagement and time and if the teacher explicitly guides the choice of words and keeps the students informed as to why a Personal Idiom File could aid vocabulary enhancement. Furthermore, the Eleven Principles of Language Learning indicate that Personal Idiom Files have the potential of adhering to ten out of eleven principles if they are executed in the right manner. This information illustrates why the Personal Idiom Files as they are currently taught and treated at the Radboud University in Nijmegen do not achieve the desired vocabulary enhancing effect for students. Students indicate Personal Idiom Files are not incorporated in classes and teachers add that there is not time available to

do so, which means that there is no chance for teachers to explicitly guide the students in their choice of words. Students do need support during the choosing of their words since the theoretical analysis has indicated that students are prone to deeming all new words of 'equal value.' In order to solve this problem, a part of the current OCS and ACS program needs to be eliminated to create space for this explicit PIF attention.

Apart from the attention from the teachers that is missing, the current PIF situation also lacks a great deal of student attention. Although PIFs have the potential of adhering to ten out of eleven language principles, the OCS and ACS PIFs currently only adhere to three. Principle 1, 2, 5, 6, 7, 8 and 9 are all violated by the students' attitude of wanting to pass tests instead of learning for the sake of personal development and acquiring knowledge. The students feel that there is no incentive to actively engage in PIF exercise when all there is to gain from it is vocabulary enhancement instead of a grade or study point. This results in students not looking at their Personal Idiom Files regularly, they do not organize their PIFs in a suitable manner, they do not look beyond the word pair of a new vocabulary item and perhaps the biggest violation of all: the students are not engaged in learning; they are engaged in completing the assignment as soon and as efficient as possible.

In order to restore the effectiveness of Personal Idiom Files in the ETC studies, more class time needs to be devoted to the support of students picking their PIF words, students need to stop treating the PIFs as a rather unimportant assignment with no weight for their study process whatsoever and students need to start actively and autonomously engaging in their own PIF process on the individual level.

The vocabulary test

AViU and AcViU are both deemed okay but the subsequent test poses as a source of dissatisfaction. As with the PIFs, students indicate studying for the test is too much work and that it yields to little result. Although the test is graded, students feel like studying more than 1500 words is too much work for just one grade. They also feel like the test could have asked for more words in order to make up for the large amount of vocabulary they have studied in order to be able to pass it. Apart from the issues both the teachers and students indicate; the theory now explains why the vocabulary test does not aid in vocabulary enhancement. It is largely relying on rote learning in order for it to be a success. Students need to deploy the rote learning strategy as a means of remembering all 1500 words within a relatively short period of time and as was stated by the theoretical foundation; rote learning does not facilitate long term storage of vocabulary items as active knowledge. The book and word list could be used as

explicit input for vocabulary enhancement, but that is only effective if students use this word list beyond the purpose of passing the test. Just rote learning the word list then shifts towards actively engaging with the provided material.

Where the word list and exercises in the book could potentially adhere to all eleven of the principles of language learning, the manner of using these materials for the purpose of passing a test makes that the materials violate six out of eleven principles.

Vocabulary proficiency

The questionnaires yielded that the students rate their own vocabulary proficiency with an average grade of a 7 out of 10. They also indicate they mostly contribute their vocabulary improvements during their studies at the English Language and Culture department to their own efforts. Teachers are of the opinion that students are rather easily persuaded that their English language use does not need improving. The theoretical framework provided an explanation as to why this conflict of opinion can occur.

Students are at a younger age incapable of noticing the gap in their own language use. They need teachers to point it out to them or to teach them how to find your own gap. The general believe with students that they do not need to actively engage in vocabulary enhancement because their language proficiency is already high enough as it is supports their mentality of not putting in the required effort when it comes to vocabulary acquisition and teaching activities and assignments. Students need to reach a high usage frequency in order to shift their passive vocabulary knowledge to active vocabulary knowledge. But why would one incorporate new words in known language, repeat and revise new material and treat assignments and exercises as means to improve language instead of as just an assignment forced upon them by teachers if their language does not need improving to begin with.

The theoretical framework has also indicated that raising awareness as to why a certain assignment is effective for vocabulary enhancement and awareness of other metalinguistic processes that either help or hinder vocabulary acquisition can aid the students' active engagement in those assignments.

Chapter V: Recommendations

It has now come to the absolute purpose of this master thesis. I will draw up several suggestions for the improvement of vocabulary teaching within the English Language and Communication department at Radboud University based on the needs analysis and the theoretical framework. This chapter will present those suggestions along with an explanation of why I suggested them and a description of how they would potentially improve vocabulary teaching and acquisition amongst students.

PIF integration

Why?

This first suggestion is aimed at hitting two birds with one stone: the PIFs and vocabulary test. It was confirmed multiple times that the Personal Idiom Files need to be incorporated in classes more to facilitate explicit student support and learning. PIFs are not deed as important enough to devote enough time too, which eludes the whole purpose of the PIFs. Considering that the teacher interviews mostly revealed that attaching a test to every single piece of course material makes for a warped mentality amongst students when it comes to learning (passing a course becomes the main goal of studying and education instead of the more fundamental learning for the sake of personal development and growth), it might sound like an ignorant solution to assign yet another test to something that is free of one at the moment. It is, however, quite an impossible task to try and spark a shift in basic student mentality. But there is a possibility of incorporating the PIFs in classes and increasing the perceived amount of importance to students so that they will be encouraged to engage with the PIFs more actively.

That is where the second bird comes in: the vocabulary test is not effective because students do not retain the vocabulary items as active knowledge. When students are included in the vocabulary collection process for the test, they are confronted with the words every week. Higher usage frequency equals more acquisition. A teacher gets the perfect opportunity to monitor word selection at the individual level by discussing the words selected by students in class every week. This process is self-regulating as well: if students pick awfully difficult words that have an extremely low frequency rate, they will have a very hard vocabulary list to study for the test later on. So in order to make sure they make studying manageable; they will need to put more effort into looking for right PIF words.

But most of all this new PIF exercise promotes autonomy within the vocabulary acquisition process by encouraging the students to engage actively in their PIF word process and in the creation of their own test.

The idea

Students will be provided with class explanations about the PIFs early on in the first period. These explanations can be backed up by academic articles such as "Examining Learner Vocabulary Notebooks" by McCrostie (2007) and "Vocabulary Notebooks: Theoretical Underpinnings and Practical Suggestions" by Nation & Nation (1995). They will proceed with the PIF assignment in the same manner as is customary right now; they will find a certain amount of words to put in their PIF files and hand in this assignment every week (or every other week). Once every week, two students will need to present five words they found for their PIFs in class. These will then be judged on appropriateness for the PIF purpose (how frequently are they used, are they 'unknown' enough, are we ever going to use them again). The whole class and the teacher will finally agree upon five words to include in the "Class PIF". This Class PIF, which will slowly be established by the students themselves every week, will then be incorporated in the vocabulary test attached to the vocabulary book. If teachers are not prepared to devote so much class time to this, a digital variant can be invented so substitute for actual class interaction. The test will exist out of the regular vocabulary list provided in the book and the additional Class PIF words (which will make up about 20% of the final grade). Students will be responsible for their own collection of Class PIF words; they can decide what words to include (to a certain extend; teachers will need to remain on guard for PIF words that are too easy or too hard). The teacher can choose to provide this Class PIF on blackboard but there is also the option of telling the students to record the words for themselves (which boosts the mentality of responsibility). In order for this idea to work; students need to be aware of the Class PIF and inclusion in the vocabulary test right from the get-go in order to instill a sense of importance.

Downsides

There are two main problems that need to be addressed. The first problem is that of class time. Teachers have indicated there is always too little time to do too much in class and this idea of PIF integration asks for yet another 10 minutes (at the minimum) of class time. A side note to this problem is that there is no option of skipping the collective Class PIF process because then the students will miss out on five words for their test list. We are also looking at an extra task for the teachers: they will need to keep up with the Class PIF themselves as well and will have to create a class-individual vocabulary section for the vocabulary test too.

The second disadvantage is that the tests become inconsistent across different OCS classes. Every class comes up with a different Class PIF and it is quite impossible to make

sure that all Class PIFs are comparable in difficulty and frequency ratings. There is always the possibility that students, management officials or other test stakeholders cannot stomach that shift in 'test fairness'. One could easily claim the test was not passed because they happened to be in the OCS class with 'the most difficult Class PIF' which in itself is another result of a passive and blaming student attitude. To make sure the effect of this problem is as little as possible; the Class PIF is combined with the regular book vocabulary list which is exactly the same for all classes. The section of the test that contains these words will be exactly the same for all classes as well; no unfairness can occur there.

In order to make sure enough class time is left to dedicate to this new PIF integration system, the following recommendation is about efficient time management of class activities.

More Discussion, fewer Presentations

Why?

Although not a direct vocabulary teaching technique, class discussion indirectly aids vocabulary acquisition and the whole purpose of Oral Communication Skills (i.e. oral communication). As was proven in the theoretical framework of this thesis; vocabulary acquisition is the result of explicit *and* incidental learning and in order to properly embed a word into both the active and passive vocabulary bank of students, they need to achieve a usage frequency that is as high as possible. Class discussion, when done thoroughly, can provide a perfect situation for students to speak and listen to English speech in a natural and unscripted environment.

Unfortunately, as was proven by the teacher interviews; participation in class discussions is at the least woeful, especially at courses other than OCS and ACS. Another issue that arose from the teacher interviews and class observations is that long student presentations prove to be very inefficient ways to spend class time since only one or two students are speaking for extensive periods of time.

The idea

OCS students present a social problem during a class presentation which will take about five minutes. It is more or less a quick explanation of a contemporary social problem that, preferably, affects the students themselves. Caution must be taken: these social problems can results in emotional students and the teacher needs to be prepared for that. These problems can be national (Syrian refugees in the Netherlands) or international discussions (Donald Trump as president for the United States), or even very local issues (such as the discussion

about attendance lists). The student provides a quick informative and preferably objective overview of the problem at hand and provides the class with at least two discussion question related to the topic. For the sake of illustration, let's say that a student just presented the social debacle of accepting Syrian refugees in the Netherlands. The student has told the class objectively about both sides to the problem; these people need a safe place to live and it is at the least considered humane to help them but on the other hand, we do not know what kind of people enter our country unseen and the general population is scared that the Syrians affect our way of life in a negative way. The first discussion question could then be: "are we as wealthy citizens of Europe more or less obliged to take in these refugees and help them in these dire times?"

The second step of this discussion exercise is to rearrange the tables and chairs in the classroom until you get two rows of chairs opposite of each other. One row of chairs will be the "NO" side and the other row will be the "YES" side. Students would then be allowed to take a chair in one of two rows. All students are obliged to pick a chair. If it turns out that a vast majority of students favors one side of the discussion, the teacher will have to appoint people who will have to play devil's advocate and switch sides. The presenter will then initiate the discussion by asking who would like to start. If no one wants to, which is likely to happen, the presenter will have to point someone out to start. The only three rules of the discussion are that people need to put their hand up before they speak, they need to respect their class mates at all times; it is just an exercise and actual opinions of students may differ from what they contribute to the discussion whilst playing the devil's advocate and lastly the two rows need to speak in turns: no two people on the same side can speak right after each other. The purpose of the discussion is very simple: reach a compromise that is acceptable for both sides. The presenter will have to guide the discussion towards a compromise if there is no progress. If the first discussion question is solved fairly quickly, there is always the second one. I would advise the students to focus the second question on a more detailed aspect of the social issue that was presented. It is also part of the presenter's tasks to keep an eye on the time; the complete discussion should not take longer than ten minutes tops.

Downsides

The big downside to this idea is that students will not be engaged in English Language and Culture course material during the discussion. By consciously choosing to debate other issues than course material related topics, students stray away from English Language and Culture

which makes for inefficient time management. Secondly, it might make students feel like the discussions are a waste of time.

The Synonym Assignment

Why?

Teachers indicated the students are too easily persuaded into believing their language proficiency is high enough as it is and the students indicate they do not feel like the PIF and vocabulary test contribute very much to their learning process. Both of these aspects will be addressed by this Synonym Assignment.

Primarily, the students are made aware of the shortcomings in their English language use. They are directly confronted with the gap between their passive and active vocabulary. This assignment would have to be tested but I believe that many students will know synonyms for the words they used in their speech themselves. It is vital that the teacher mentions the difference between active and passive vocabulary in order to provide the student with a theoretical reason as to why the student uses one word in active speech and forgets about the other. Secondly, the students are provided with a simple and quick way of monitoring their own spoken English. The good thing about this assignment is that all students are being taught at the same time: the speaker is learning about his or her personal language gap and the other students are learning vocabulary synonyms and about this awareness raising technique.

Without knowing that improvement is needed; how can one improve? Many English Language and Culture students enter university thinking that their English is quite good already. And of course, their use and control of the English language is probably above the Dutch national average. The students need to be made aware of the fact that their English is not nearly good enough for the high standards that are expected of graduated Bachelor and Master students of English Language and Culture. Only then do they maybe grasp the mentality of needing to actively improve one's language use at all times, which will translate positively towards PIF engagement and to general vocabulary acquisition.

The idea

At the start of period 1, the OCS students will be set a class assignment devoted to two things: raising awareness with the students about the gaps in their English language use and secondly, and more importantly, teaching the students how to notice the gaps in their language themselves from there on out. Students are not told in advance that they are going to be

completing this assignment in class; they need to be blank slates. A student will have to speak about a topic that is handed to them by the teacher for one minute. Examples of topics could be "animals", "education" or more advanced topics like "politics" and "racism". All other students will have to listen to the short speech the student provides and write down all words for which they think a more advanced synonym exists and preferably provide the synonym with it. The hypothesis for this idea is that students will not provide too advanced vocabulary in their speeches because of their low level of proficiency (first year students) and stress brought on by the sudden task. This will mean that the reviewing students can pick up on potential synonyms more easily. The teacher will listen for potential synonyms as well in order to make sure that a speech is not met with very little input afterwards. After the minute is completed, the student will be asked to reflect upon his own speech: how did he or she think it went?

After that the class will mention the words they recorded earlier to the student and the student will be asked if he or she knows a more advanced synonym for that exact same word. If no such knowledge is present, the class will have to figure out a synonym together. When there is not enough input from the classroom, the teacher will have to provide the replaceable words for the students.

This assignment can then be repeated by letting another student speak for one minute and doing the same process all over again. After the assignment is finished, the teacher needs to indicate that this recording process can also be done individually and it is then time to explain the students about the theory behind noticing your gap in language use.

Downsides

There are, unfortunately, a few downsides to this idea. The first being that it asks for precious class time but diminishing the length of class presentations might create enough spare time to engage students in an effective class activity like this synonym assignment. When done properly, this assignment can use about 70% of class time which is now devoted to other course material that needs to be discussed as well. Secondly, it might be big ask of first year students to speak about a random topic for one minute in English without any form of preparation. The nerves and anxiety that come with such an assignment might influence the language use of the students in a negative way, which in turn eludes the purpose of raising the students' awareness to their own linguistic shortcomings. In order to solve this potential problem, this assignment can be carried out later in the first year when students have gotten used to each other, to university and to the class situation.

Chapter VI: Looking back and looking forward

The internship and Language and Communication Coaching Master program require me to write a self-evaluation as vital part of the process. It is a chapter which contains an evaluation of the investigation I conducted and the process of writing the thesis itself, points that could be improved whenever I will conduct a similar research again, other critical remarks on conduct and outcomes, future implementations and research that could be carried out based on the conclusions that were drawn in this thesis, and a report of personal development over the months of education I enjoyed during the Language and Communication Master's program. The final part of this thesis rests upon my personal experiences and should not be included in the objective investigation that was conducted and was earlier described in the remainder of this paper.

The process: points to improve

As with any educational project; mistakes are made which are a vital part of learning. This following paragraph contains the process of noticing my own gap when it comes to conducting qualitative research, executing a brief as part of an internship and writing a thesis as a result of it.

The first change I would issue the next time I will be conducting qualitative research is to pilot my questionnaires before I would actually administer them to my target group. I have not done a pilot now and although no crippling problems arose from the formulation and choice of questions, minor issues could have been prevented. As an example I would like to mention question 22 and 23. They both concerned the vocabulary list that was present in the back of both *Advanced English Vocabulary in Use* and *Academic Vocabulary in Use.* A few students answered the questions with a question mark or no relevant answer because they had been unaware there was such a list present in the book. I had meant to ask the students what they thought of the vocabulary presented to them by the book, but instead they were confused. Although there were only a few students that were baffled by this question, I could have found out a pilot run. It is also an issue that is quite easily solved by reformulating the question so that it would be clear from the formulation that I meant the list in the back of the book.

A second issue with the questionnaires is that I choose not to incorporate pronunciation as a part of OCS and ACS. The students are submitted to pronunciation classes in the first half of the first year. Although the purpose of these classes is to either promote British or American accented English to the students and thus not vocabulary enhancement, it

is still a source of exposure to spoken English which facilitates implicit learning. In hindsight, I could have included the pronunciation part of OCS more in my research.

The third issue is that my participant group was rather low in number. A lot of students did not respond to my calls for help and one teacher never proposed the questionnaires to her students. By the time I found out, it was too late to do anything about it. It could also be seen as a discrepancy that the OCS questionnaires were administered on paper and the ACS questionnaires were filled in online.

It is no secret that I had to write this thesis twice. My first approach was informal and I treated the investigation more or less like a report to be read by people I knew personally. Part of that approach was that I never processed the answers to the open questions in the questionnaires in an academic manner. I did the second time and it made the outcome of the questionnaires much clearer.

All of these questionnaire issues can be traced back by one fundamental mistake I made. I wrote the questionnaires back when I started the internship based on my own ideas and feelings about the issues. I had spoken to teachers and students before I started and I thought I had a clear idea of what was supposed to be in the questionnaire. It was only after I handed in the first version of my thesis that I was confronted with the missing theoretical methodology that should guide the process of making a questionnaire for qualitative, linguistic research. I am sure I would have prevented all the previously mentioned mistakes if only I had approached the matter from the academic, theoretical angle instead of from the practical. Finally, I realise that I could relatively easily have interviewed more stakeholders than only OCS and ACS teachers and students. Other valuable sources of information may have been teachers of other courses and, of course, the head of department.

Critical notes on other issues

Apart from the points I could have improved, there were also issues and experiences beyond my power that I still noticed and needed to deal with. The following paragraph describes those points.

I was, quite frankly, a little shocked by some of the answers the students filled in on the questionnaires. Not because they deviated from the hypotheses, but because of their tone and choice of language. Appendix 3 and 4 contain the open answers they gave and it is clear that some students did not take the questionnaire as seriously as I had assumed. Lots of comments were also plainly rude. Of course it is a good thing that students give me their uncensored opinion, that is the whole point of an anonymous questionnaire, but why would

someone have to use curse words and instead of answering the posed question, leave a drawing? Perhaps even more peculiar is that I spoke with the same students that just handed me back their questionnaire at the end of one of the OCS classes during which I had handed the questionnaires out to the students. I spoke to the students in a class discussion setting about their thoughts on vocabulary acquisition and teaching. I had not read the questionnaire answers by then so I did not know about the rudeness yet. Based on the discussion we had, I had the feeling students were eager to help, they were polite and kind towards the teachers. The questionnaires told me the exact opposite. I am wondering if this is not the issue with anonymous questionnaires. The students know it cannot be traced back to them if they are rude, uninterested or do not cooperate. I am aware that this is a matter of opinion but personally I just cannot fathom why someone would be rude on a questionnaire or evaluation form whatsoever. Do students forget that someone is going to process these answers? That they are going to be contained in a report, thesis or investigation?

A second experience that left me baffled was the troublesome communication I had with one of the teachers. The four teachers were the pillars of this internship: they are the experienced and the ones, in my mind at least, who have got the power to spark change. I found three of the four teachers to be extremely kind and cooperative. The fourth one did talk to me when I would run into her in the hallways or at her office, but in the six months that I conducted my internship, she did not reply to any of my emails. We had made appointments for the interview with her and she had agreed to hand out questionnaires to her students, which she preferred over me coming to do it in her class, but I never saw those questionnaires again, nor did she turn up for our appointment. Any further attempts I made at conducting the interview with her were not fruitful. In my opinion, everyone is entitled to their own opinion and choices in such matters. It is just that I was quite lost upon what to do. I knew I needed that interview in order to provide a complete picture of the teachers' opinions, but I also knew I could not force her to give it to me. In the end I gave up on it and conducted my investigation without her opinion included.

Future research

This thesis implements further research on the topics of vocabulary acquisition and teaching. The following paragraph contains suggestions for further research that can be conducted based on the outcomes and discussion in this thesis

The first and most obvious future research is one conducted on the actual effect of the recommendations I made in this paper. It was not a part of my internship to actually apply the

suggestions made to the OCS and ACS classes so they should be tested and piloted before they are incorporated in the existing program. I, for one, am very curious as to what effects they have on the students, their mentality and attitude and, of course, what they would do for vocabulary enhancement. I am also curious as to what the teachers think of my suggestion and if they would be willing to execute them in their classrooms. After my suggestions would have been checked, further research would then have to yield an answer as to why they work or do not work and what could be improved about them

A large outcome of my thesis was that students suffer from an attitude problem in the form of passiveness, a lack of autonomy and the tendency to follow education for the sake of graduating instead of education to acquire knowledge. It is a problem that I could not directly solve, but it does sound like a problem that is vital for the effectiveness of contemporary education. Future research could perhaps extend this problem of attitude beyond just vocabulary teaching and acquisition. Does this attitude exist in students for other courses as well? What are the effects of this attitude on learning in other areas of education? At what age does it start? What is the cause of the attitude? Is it really as generally applicable as this thesis has shown? There are a lot of questions that still can be answered in this field.

Concerning the Personal Idiom Files, future research could investigate if the problems the English Language and Culture department of the Radboud University has also arise at other universities. Is the execution of the Personal Idiom File strategy problematic at other universities as well? Is the poor manner in which students look for PIF words that is characteristic of the ETC PIFs in Nijmegen also extendable to other students at other cities? Perhaps the concept of the PIF is good but it is stumped by the lack of mentality of students needed in order to achieve the best possible effectiveness out of this autonomous and individual vocabulary learning strategy.

Reflection: where I was

About a year ago, I started the Language and Communication Master at Radboud University. To be quite honest; I had no clear intentions as to what I was going to do with an LCC Masters' degree. I was well aware that I should have a clear idea for the future at that age, but I had not. The LCC master spoke to me in the sense that it was a practical Master which was prone towards education and language learning as opposed to the quite technical and academically profound general linguistics master. I decided to dive in the deep end.

I started the internship with a clear hypothesis in my mind: I was required to alter the existing vocabulary teaching methods executed within the OCS and ACS classroom in order

to boots vocabulary enhancement with the students. It was not before long that I noticed that the core problem of the dissatisfaction amongst students and the unease of teachers had more to do with cognitive and psychological attitude instead of the concrete forms of education.

Reflection: where I am

Although not entirely graduated yet, I can say that I have finished the Language and Communication Coaching Master's program and fortunately I can confirm that I made the right choice. The English for Specific Purpose course, the course that is at the heart of the LCC Master in my opinion, offered the students an opportunity to conduct an ESP training in real life for real people. Our class was employed by the MuZIEum in Nijmegen to train their tour guides. They were hosting an increasing number of international tourists and the tour guides, who are working there because they experience blindness first hand, were generally not trained in conducting their tours in English. We spend weeks designing an appropriate training for the tour guides in class and on three separate afternoons over the course of three weeks, we taught the tour guides how to guide in English. Of course, three weeks is too short to really teach anyone anything profound and on top of that, we saw three different groups of guides every week. Still, it was during those afternoons that I found I loved helping these people. I always wondered how I, a student with no particular experience in education who is still very much in need of guidance and education herself, could ever help someone else, educate someone else. But these short afternoons with the guides taught me more than I could ever teach them. I cannot imagine me standing before a classroom of twenty-five or more students that are in my classroom because they need to be. But I can imagine me teaching one or two students at the time because they want me to teach them. I want to get to know my students and help them with their insecurities and problems. Since those weeks at the MuZIEum, I have started helping students with their secondary school English classes, which is not quite ESP yet, but it has the makings of it.

In hindsight, I can say that I had to drop pretty much all my original ideas about where my internship was going to lead me. I applied the process of needs analysis, which was taught to me during the ESP classes, to a situation that was quite close to home. After all, I had enjoyed the OCS and ACS classes back in my bachelor days as well, and I was familiar with all of the teachers I had to interview. On top of that, I was encouraged to look at education and learning in a completely different manner. I too was, and maybe even still am, prone to studying for the sake of graduating. I recognized what the teachers told me in myself. My natural curiosity had disappeared as well somewhere during secondary school. I was well

versed in the art of figuring out what to study and what not to study in order to get a sufficient grade for all tests, I was a talented time manager and an efficient essay writer. I was confronted with the fact that education should be about teaching students how to be a good essay writer and not an efficient one, that is about developing a young human being and acquiring knowledge to enrich the mind, not about how to get as many high grades as fast as possible so that I can wave my Master's degree in front of my future employer's face to indicate that I had studied at university. It has all changed my look upon education and self-development forever. I have been inspired to teach children and young adults not to be afraid of 'not knowing something'. To illustrate that it has finally all dawned on me: I have started to keep my own vocabulary notebook on my PC, not because someone has told me to do so or because I need to complete some mandatory assignment, but because I want to improve my vocabulary that, I have noticed, is by far not proficient enough.

Reflection: what did I learn

The following paragraph provides an outline of various skills and knowledge I acquired during the Language and Communication Coaching Master's program and the subsequent internship.

All the knowledge I acquired about English for Specific Purposes, Second Language Acquisition, Pragmatics, Computer-assisted Language Learning and Language Testing aside, I acquired a set of skills that is going to aid me for the rest of my life. Just the internship alone has taught me how to conduct a needs analysis, how to write a questionnaire, and how to conduct qualitative linguistic research, although I needed two attempts at that. ESP taught me that being unflappable and flexible when it comes to planning ahead is vital.

I mostly value my new insights about education. Education is not just an institute for the transfer of knowledge from a teacher to a student. It has the potential to be so much more. There is a place for empathy in education, it the art of providing guidance to young people.

My first thesis was rejected and that shook me a little (or a lot). It felt like falling at the very last hurdle. After I had composed myself, I decided to start from the very beginning again and approach the materials I had collected during my interviews and the administration of the questionnaires from an academic, objective angle. I am glad I did that because I believe this current thesis is more academic, concise and, although my personal input and illustration is now missing, just as much 'me' as my previous thesis was.

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Appendix 1: Interview questions

1. What do you think of the current state of vocabulary acquisition amongst English Language and Culture students?

2. Whose responsibility is it to enhance the vocabulary of a student?

3. What do you think of the PIFs?

4. What do you think of the Course Material Book?

5. Have you executed any personal vocabulary teaching techniques in class?

6. Is there potential to introduce more active vocabulary teaching to other courses than OCS/ACS?

7. What do you think is the biggest problem we need overcome in order to help student vocabulary acquisition along?

Appendix II: Student questionnaire

Questionnaire I: Vocabulary Acquisition

Thank you very much for taking the time to fill in this questionnaire. It will ask you some questions about your experience with the vocabulary teaching and learning you received during your time enrolled in the English Language and Culture study. Please be as honest and thorough as you can. We are trying to improve and innovate vocabulary acquisition for the years to come and your help is really appreciated.

Note: this questionnaire is anonymous by default. There is, however, a possibility of speaking with me in person about vocabulary teaching in more detail. If you feel like participating in this short interview, please do fill in your name. I will contact you via your teacher.

General information

1. Your name (if you are willing to talk to me): _____

2. Your current OCS course (I or ACS): _____

General questions
The following questions refer to the general state of affairs concerning vocabulary teaching. During your OCS classes you received vocabulary acquisition through the means of the Personal Idiom Files (PIFs) and the course material book (either *Advanced Vocabulary in Use* or *Academic Vocabulary in Use*).

3. How would you rate your own vocabulary use in class in spoken English on a scale from 1 to 10?

Poor   very good
  1   /   2   /   3   /   4   /   5   /   6   /   7   /   8   /   9   /   10

4. Would you like to improve your own vocabulary use in English?

No, it's fine as it is   Yes, please.
  1   /   2   /   3   /   4   /   5   /   6   /   7   /   8   /   9   /   10

5. How much do you feel your vocabulary use in English has improved since you started studying English Language and Culture?

It hasn't improved   I improved tremendously
  1   /   2   /   3   /   4   /   5   /   6   /   7   /   8   /   9   /   10

6. How much do you feel you contributed yourself to your own vocabulary acquisition process?

Nothing   Very much
  1   /   2   /   3   /   4   /   5   /   6   /   7   /   8   /   9   /   10

7. How much do you feel the OCS classes contributed to your vocabulary acquisition process?

Nothing   very much
   1 /   2 /   3 /   4 /   5 /   6 /   7 /   8 /   9 / 10

Questions on the Personal Idiom Files (PIFs)

10. Do you like the Personal Idiom Files?

Not at all   Very much
   1 /   2 /   3 /   4 /   5 /   6 /   7 /   8 /   9 / 10

11. What do you like about the Personal Idiom Files?

_____

_____

_____

12. What don't you like about the Personal Idiom Files?

_____

_____

_____

13a. How much do the Personal Idiom Files help you improve your vocabulary?

Not at all   Very much
   1 /   2 /   3 /   4 /   5 /   6 /   7 /   8 /   9 / 10

13b. Why?

_____

_____

_____

14. How do you think the Personal Idiom Files could be improved?

_____

_____

_____

15. Where do you usually find the words for your Personal Idiom File?

_____

_____

_____

16. Do you find it difficult to find words for you Personal Idiom File?

Not at all   Very difficult
      /   2 /   3 /   4 /   5 /   6 /   7 /   8 /   9   / 10

Questions on the course material book (either _Advanced Vocabulary in Use_ or _Academic Vocabulary in Use_)

17. Which book do you use in your current OCS classes?

    Advanced Vocabulary in Use /   _Academic Vocabulary in Use_

18. Do you like the course material book?

Not at all   Very much
   1 /   2 /   3 /   4 /   5 /   6 /   7 /   8 /   9 / 10

19. What do you like about your course material book?

_____

_____

_____

20. What don't you like about your course material book?

_____

_____

_____

21. What did you think of the last vocabulary test you took based on the course material book?

_____

_____

_____

22. What do you think of the word list the course material book provides?

_____

_____

_____

23. What do you use the word list for/do with the word list provided in the course material book?

_____

_____

_____

25. Did you find it difficult to learn the word list by heart for the test?

Not at all   Very difficult
  1 / 2 / 3 / 4 / 5 / 6 / 7 / 8 / 9 / 10

26. Do you think the course material book helped you improve your vocabulary?

Not at all   it helped enough   very much
1   2   3   4   5

27. Why/Why not?

_____

_____

_____

28. Could you describe your ideal vocabulary test?

_____

_____

_____

29. Can you estimate what percentage of all the words in the list provided by the course material book you can still recognize and recall today?

___%

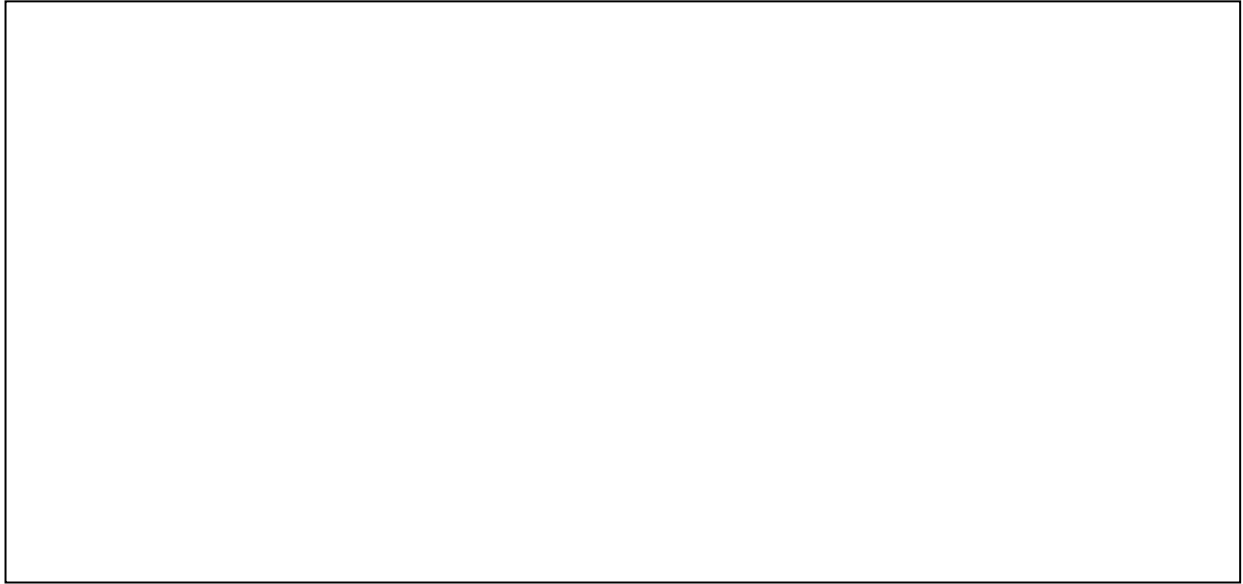**30. Can you estimate what percentage of all the words in the list provided by the course material book you still use today in your everyday speech once in a while?**

___%

31. Have you got any further comments about any subject regarding vocabulary teaching and learning in the English Language and Culture study?

Thank you very much for your cooperation!

Appendix 3: Answers to open questions on student questionnaires filled in by OCS students

What do you like about the Personal Idiom Files?
OCS
1   I don't think it's useful; I do make them, but when reading them back, I have forgotten all those words.
2   It makes me stay awake all night for a reason
3   Well… There's fancy words in there.
4   Reading articles you find interesting to find new words
5   The idea of looking up every-day words you don't know and spot 'in the wild' is good. It helps you to learn essential words that are often used.
6   Nothing really, I personally retain only a handful of words.
7   It's interesting to find new words
8   That you take the time to actually look up the meaning of words you don't know
9   It keeps you interested in unknown words and having to research the pronunciation is a big plus
10   Nothing
11   Nothing
12   nothing
13   That you are stimulated to look up words you do not know when you come across them in books etc.
14   Not much
15   It gives me the opportunity to learn new words that I'll immediately forget and never ever use.
16   I like that I have to search to find sources for my PIF words
17   nothing really
18   In some way you do learn new words but you don't use them anymore after that week you to hand it in
19   Nothing
20   -
21   you see a lot of news and articles during the search for PIF words
22   They contain a lot of interesting vernacular
23   you are actively changing the way you use the English language and improving your vocabulary
24   nothing

What don't you like about the Personal Idiom Files?
1   It takes up a lot of time. I has no general use. I don't think it contributes to my vocabulary at all.
2   I hardly remember any of the vocabulary I wrote down
3   Well… I need to spend an awfull amount of time looking up enough fancy words for the bloody thing.
4   The fact that I forget about them once I handed them in.
5   Sometimes it is difficult to find enough words which result in looking for words only for the sake of the PIF.
6   the lack of weight they carry
7   It just doesn't work for me. I loop up the words and their meaning, but then never or seldom use it again. It takes a lot of time with barely any results.

8   That you look up 50 words quickly at end of each period and then not really look at them again.

9   the one-per-week thing at the start. Yes, I'll do it, no, I might find more words one week than another

10   It takes too much time and I will probably never use these words

11   Everything

12   It is boring, copy paste words, you do not learn anything

13   I am usually still too lazy to do this and it is not really fun and brain-numbing

14   Very much

15   it takes a lot of work

16   I don't retain the words as I am never required to use them in real life

17   It is just something that you have to do and you can do it 20 minutes, had it in, and never look at it again. I know that this is not what you are supposed to do, but it just not very challenging and you're not actually learning from it, you know that you won't be tested on it so instead you study for something you will be tested on.

18   I feel that there more interesting ways of improving my vocabulary than with the use of the PIFs

19   It does not help in acquiring a larger active vocabulary, only a passive one + so many required entries that the search for new words becomes very random.

20   I won't use this!!

21   You don't acquisit words for your active knowledge

22   it's quite a lot of effort

23   you can cheat easily you can just look up hard words in the online dictionary they day before you have to hand it in.

24   it's tedious, repetitive, useless, copy & paste work

How much do the PIFs help you improve your vocabulary. WHY?

1   2   well, read back

2   3   -

3   1   who would ever go and have a look at the bloody thing again? I'm sure we all have better things to do,

4   7   often you finds words that you can use in daily speech

5   6   not all words are very useful, because they are not used very often

6   2   I do not look at them

7   2   see question 12

8   3   see question 12

9   7   it challenges you to actually add the words to your vocab

10   1   I don't use these words

11   3   I don't use them

12   1   no need to practice them

13   2   see question 12

14   6   I forget most of the words immediately

15   3   I don't care about it.

16   4   I don't use the words often

17   6   because sometimes you come across funny words that you can use in your PiF and then you also remember them because you think they are funny

18   3   I don't look at them anymore after I have finished them, eventhough I knew I should

19   1   because I will hand it in ad ever think about it again.

20   2   as I said, I found new words but only passively and it helps me more to hear

		the words being used
21	4	it's not stored well in my brain
22	7	I try to use them in daily life
23	4	It improved my passive vocabulary but my active vocabulary which I use in conversations etc did not improve much
24	3	a few words I might use but almost none.

How do you think the PIF could be improved?

1. perhaps by her to be honestr I think there should be no PIF whatsoever, just a tip in the beginning, 'note down difficult words, it might help you!'
2. -
3. I don't think they rally can be.
4. By
5. Replace the PIFs as they are now by texts like the ones we have dealt with in class, containing questions about words (families) rather than just looking up the meaning of a word.
6. Create an in-class assignment or introduce something that makes them relevant.
7. maybe it would help to actually do something with the pif words in class, so that we have to use the new words.
8. Only by making sure people actually pay attention to the words ad not use random words just to be done with it.
9. Review it more strictly. Some people just pick random words from the dictionary. Rehearse in class maybe?
10. Get rid of them
11. not do them
12. get rid off them. The vocab exams are sufficient
13. some exercises or something
14. I don't know
15. -
16. By using the words in an exam somehow
17. Maybe with some sort of test, so students really need to study their pifs
18. PIFs could be improved if we used them during the classes as well or would be incorperated into the exams
19. It's hopeless
20. I think it is only based on reading, not on talking/hearing. That would help me though + less entries + more different exercises.
21. Loose the random character, take a theme each weak, so the words you find match with each other
22. -
23. Make it a weekly assignment where people need to explain their words in class- thus using the word actively
24. Make it more active, perhaps ??? words

Where do you usually find the words for your PIF?

1. in my study books or in the BBC news articles
2. internet, sometimes mandatory reading
3. Terry Pratchett's books
4. The guardian.co.uk
5. I try to find them in articles or study books, but when I can't find enough of the, I desperately tur to literary works with words that are almost never used anymore.

6 The dictionary
7 It varies, sometimes in newspaper article, sometimes in books, sometimes from radio or television.
8 Books I read
9 When going abroad, watchting series/plays, reading
10 The guardian website
11 New articles
12 Britlit reading material
13 In articles
14 Books I read
15 A random dictionary online
16 On word lists, during classes or newspaper sites such as the guardian
17 When reading in textbooks, from other courses when someone says something in class, and when watching films/series
18 Articles, books, the internet, study materials, ocs class
19 Books ad text from Britlit
20 Oxford Dictionary → it immediately shows the phonetic transcription, so that is convenient.
21 Guardian.co.uk
22 Found an 'unusual words' reddit page.
23 Last year → Oxford dictionaries, now → text mining assignment and aticles of Buzzfeed UK and the Guardian
24 Dictionairs or online newspapers

What do you like about your course material book?
1 It's very visual and quite up to date
2 A lot of vocabulary, they are listed by themes
3 Nothing. It is bloody awful
4 Vocabulary according to themes, expressions and verb phrases, colloquial speech
5 It categorises words by topic and it then provides more than just a definition, like registers, word family, related words etc.
6 The solutions are at the end
7 It is clear and straight-forward, with useful exercises
8 It contains a lot of phrases I didn't know before
9 Hmmm, the system of studying left and revising right-ish
10 It has pictures in it
11 Nothing
12 It's logical and clear
13 Pictures and sentences to help you remember the words
14 The exercises are kind of nice
15 -
16 It doesn't just list words, but uses them in context of articles, conversations etc.
17 The words are easier to learn because you learn multiple words from one topic in a chapter. The exercises are also really great when practising/learning words
18 Some chapters are interesting
19 It's structured
20 -
21 Contains a lot of words
22 It showed the context of the words
23 -

24   Nothing

What don't you like about your course material book?
1. Sometimes there is no context behind an expression.
2. Too many pages (vocab) per week nobody can keep so many words
3. Everything
4. It's very hard to study from
5. It's quite a lot to study and it doesn't always provide definitions
6. Learning vocabulary in isolation seems very inefficient to me
7. It's a lot of new words to learn at once
8. That you learn so many in one go that you've forgotten half 2 weeks later
9. Very childish set-up, revision is hard with the answers all the way in the back
10. It's a bit boring
11. the structure
12. It's fine
13. Well, vocabulary studying is not the most thing to do.
14. It's dull, but that's because it's just studying words
15. –
16. It's a lot of material in one go
17. It are quite a lot of words that you have to study, but on the other hand, if you start on time that's not really much of a problem
18. it is a not so interesting way of learning new vocabulary
19. It's boring
20. It is childish, with the illustrations and all. And it is not up to date, I want to learn the words people of my age use!
21. The theoretical character, too less graphic
22. –
23. –
24. It's simply memorizing words for a test. And never using them again

What did you think of the last vocabulary test you took based on the course material book?
1. It was alright, not difficult at all.
2. It was quite easy, but I think that's because I was lucky
3. It matched the book
4. It was okay
5. Only little of the material was asked about, but overall a good test that accurately measured my knowledge
6. It was doable
7. It was a good test, I just had the wrong learning strategy
8. It was a good test, apart from the confusion on what we had to study
9. Easy, got an A. Pity that the words come in blocks, so if you don't know two chapters out of 50, you'll still fail
10. It's fine
11. Fine
12. It was good
13. Fine
14. It was nice that the exercises were of various kinds
15. It wasn't that difficult

16. I liked the format, but 50 units (~1500 words) is a lot to revise for just one exam
17. The test as okay. It's only such a shame that we are asked to learn so many words, and only so few are asked in the test
18. It represented the book, though the exam was a bit confusing but that was because of a misunderstanding in our class about the study material and there were a few mistakes in the exam
19. It was fine
20. Yes, well it contained a lot of words I have forgotten and it required hours of studying word lists
21. Quit easy if you study enough, but extensive in content
22. It was fine
23. –
24. It's always the same just memorizing words and phrases and saying them in different ways, boring.

What do you think of the word list the course material book provides?

1. The words are often well-chosen, and useful in conversations
2. –
3. Absolutely terrible. We know most of those words already
4. ? I didn't use it
5. Most words are useful and I sooner or later hear/need them elsewhere
6. Some are useful and appropriate for the level in class, but others are straightout too elaborate to commonly use.
7. It's useful
8. It's alright
9. Very variable in difficulty
10. I do actually use some of these words
11. Fine
12. Nice
13. There is a word list? I did not use it
14. I don't think I have encountered it
15. It's quite simple. Too simple
16. A lot of words are already in my passive vocabulary, but some of the words I don't know from there are very useful
17. I think that the list is very broad and that you really learn relevant words that you will actually use later on
18. It's ok
19. They're fine, not too hard
20. Dated, some were nice (the animal and envirement-one's)
21. I like the words that are in there
22. I don't remember much of it
23. Also, I hate learning words without clear context, so the vocab exams were aweful last year
24. A lot of words are almost useless or ????

What do you use the word list for/do with the word list provided in the course material book?

1. I look over them at times (when I want to sound smart :D)
2. Feel guilty because not looking at it
3. Absolutely nothing

4. ? I didn't use it
5. I learn the words from the chapters, not from the list in the back of the book, because it contains words we don't have to know for the other test
6. Study for the test
7. Not much, to be honest
8. Not much, apart from studying for the test
9. studying
10. Copy it, and I use some of the words
11. nothing
12. I study it?
13. –
14. see the previous question
15. I use it to study for my vocab tests
16. I just study it for the exam
17. in speech
18. I don't use it anymore/look at it anymore
19. study them
20. I study it for the test. Some 20 or 30 words I now frequently use
21. For the test and hopefully active knowledge
22. –
23. –
24. Learned them for the test

Do you think the course material book helped you improve your vocabulary? (1 to 5 scale)

1	4	The words were often used in contexts, so you could imagine the word being used (and I did tend to use them)!
2	3	-
3	1	The words are very common, mostly.
4	3	I learned new words and expressions
5	4	See 22. Most words I often come across somewhere
6	3	It gave a broad range of vocabulary and filled many gaps
7	3	I'm not sure
8	3	So many word at once, you forget them again very easily
9	3	It does help, but it's not the most natural way of learning
10	3	I use some of the words, but most of them not
11	2	I forgot them (most of them)
12	5	I know new words now
13	3	I forgot some of them again
14	3	I studied the words so I remember a few
15	3	-
16	3	Some of the unknown words are good in everyday use, so that's why I retain them, though some leave my head right after the exam
17	4	See 22
18	3	I have learned some new words but I have probably forgotten more than I still remember considering that some subjects in the book don't interest me/came up in my life
19	4	I learned new words
20	2	As said, 30 out of 100 words is not enough for me and the effort I put in studying

21	3	Lot of new words in my passive knowledge
22	1	-
23	2	No context
24	1	I hardly use any of the words

Could you describe your ideal vocabulary test?

1. I wouldn't have a clue…
2. no test
3. the one not given
4. Fill-in-the-blank type of test that accepts several answers as correct, or 0,5 points for okay-but-not-ideal answers
5. It's good as it is
6. An oral test where the students construct sentences on the fly would be great to test competence
7. I liked the once we had this year, but it would help if we worked with the book (or PIF) in class a bit more -> repetition
8. Sentences describing the words you need to fill in
9. mixed, with words from all sections, and more than 50 words if we have to study hundreds
10. The current tests are fine
11. Oral
12. I like the current tests
13. Putting words in context
14. I don't think so
15. No, I'm sorry
16. Writing an article with a select group of ~15 unknown words every couple of weeks and talking about them in class
17. Maybe fewer words per category, but more categories
18. A test that is based on the actual classes and PIFs
19. No, tests are never ideal
20. Oral and written + more variety in word lists + sources
21. Something with speaking
22. –
23. –
24. Getting-meaning from context, text mining

Have you got any further comments about any subject regarding vocabulary teaching and learning in the English Language and Culture study?

1. *drawing of a face*
2. *drawing of the Big Ben*
3. *drawing of "Perry the Platypus"*
4. –
5. –
6. I think flat vocabulary acquisition is highly overrated
7. I think it might help to teach vocab more actively in class, but I wouldn't really know how…
8. I like the questions about words in articles that de Vries has been doing lately it works a lot better than PIF
9. Maybe practice a bit more in class?
10. –

11. –
12. No, that's okay
13. –
14. No
15. –
16. I think if we'd spend more time actively engaging with a small group of unknown vocab words, we'd retain them much more easily then when we revise ~1500 words for one exam
17. –
18. –
19. I think it's not very present in the classes. This could help with actively using it
20. I really hope this subject can be improved because everyone here wants to learn more words, but not this way
21. NO
22. *drawing of a fish*
23. NO.
24. –

Appendix 4: Answers to open questions on student questionnaires given by ACS students

What do you like about the Personal Idiom File?
1. You read articles you normally wouldn't read
2. The idea of looking up words you do not know as a personal rule
3. That you can choose words yourself
4. A log on new words, nice to look back and see you learned some new words
5. -

6. They facilitate the subconscious processes which happen when you meet a new word because you make the words explicit rather than just looking at them
7. That they force me to look at vocabulary in more detail
8. The fact that the teachers try to get us to acquire more vocabulary
9. You put effort into finding new vocab, thus it usually sticks
10. Feels useful
11. -
12. You really know the meaning and the proper context of a word instead of "I've seen it before and I have an idea of what it means"
13. Discovering new words/meanings

What don't you like about the Personal Idiom Files?

1. In the end you have this huge file, but you never look at it again
2. The fact that the personal rule that should motivate me is turned into an external rule that compels me
3. That you are forced to pick X amount of words every week, which leads to "searching" for words that do not end up being used by you in everyday life
4. They don't seem to work/increase vocab
5. There's really no point; I can't remember a single word I wrote down
6. Sometimes, it feels like a bit of a hassle to find new words, especially when you have a certain minimum that you need to reach
7. The amount of time it consumes and the repetitiveness of the whole exercise
8. The fact that most of the time I am inclined to put random, old-fashioned words in my PIF, just because its due
9. Because of the mandatory amount of words, I usually copy+paste the description or add words I would never use
10. Hard to keep up
11. The amount of work it takes to "find" words you don't know
12. Making the PIF often feels like a chore and most students just end up looking up a whole bunch of difficult words for the PIF while they don't actually implement those words into their vocabulary
13. The amount of work, forced.

How much do the personal Idiom Files help you improve your vocabulary? WHY?

1	2	Because you would need to study it, which I don't/didn't
2	6	The potential fruitful activity of looking up and documenting of unknown words one comes across during reading for other courses usually turns out to become the exercise of actively looking for words last minute that look like one might not have known them at some point, in order to fulfil the quotum of words one needs to pass the assignment.
3	4	See above: because you are required to find a certain amount of words, you start searching for "difficult" words if you have not encountered any words.
4	5	After writing them down and looking up meaning, form, sentences, etc. I never look at them again because there are too many other things to do.
5	1	I can't remember a single word I wrote down
6	8	You can re-view the words that you've found. I personally look at my PIF from time to time to see whether I still know most of the words
7	5	It broadens my lexicon
8	2	Because you put them in and then forget about the words, especially

because most of the time they are not really 'usable'.

9	5	I definitely learned some new vocab, but definitely not all of it
10	7	Effort, repetition
11	6	In order to remember the words I should do more than collect them in a file
12	5	As I said, it felt like a chore and by list making the list I didn't feel like I was going to use all those words in my vocabulary – a handful at most.
13	4	-

How do you think the Personal Idiom Files could be improved?

1. 50 words per period, and urge students to use a website like memrise to learn them by heart
2. By coming up with a form to the assignment that includes a motivation for students to actually stop reading when they come across a genuinely unknown word an d look that word up. The form should be as far as possible intrinsically motivating, rather than externally compelling.
3. I would have benefited more from having academic word lists that are frequently used in research and academic talks – maybe it would help if people can choose between "linguistics" words and "literature/culture studies" words next to "standard" academic words. I am talking about words like "antecedents", "components', "variance", "onset"… these are words we often encounter in our reading, and I think it would be beneficial to actually use them in conversations and discussions about the material presented in classes.
4. Make it more interactive, don't treat is as an extra little side project next to the 'real work.'
5. Delete them from the program
6. The PIF could be used more interactively. Alike the last months of our OCs course, classes could be set up to do language games etc. with the words.
7. By turning them into games to do as groups such as the dictionary game
8. By stating that you have to put in words from your passive vocabulary
9. Lower the amount of words, so it becomes more of a guideline on how to improve vocab and let the students use it themselves, rather than a chore with a deadline
10. Digitalised with phonemic keyboard option
11. I think it'd be better to work with fewer words and using these in various activities (in groups?)
12. -
13. Given articles/texts, or using the idioms more

Where do you usually find the words for you Personal Idiom File?

1. Random articles or books I have to read for other classes
2. In the academic texts we need to read for other courses
3. If I do not encounter them in my casual reading or reading for my classes, I go to the longreads of the Guardian/New York Times or to science-magazines online. In other words: I go to places where I can expect to harvest many 'difficult' words.
4. Newspapers, articles and books
5. For OCS I used the BC&H BBC History pages, for ACS I used other academic articles I encountered at several courses
6. Mostly academic articles. However, these also contain a lot of specialized jargon that I'll probably never use
7. Literature, Academic papers, text books

8. books, articles
9. Reading material, class, or browsing through an online dictionary
10. Literature (novels)
11. Mainly in novels we had to read for other courses and in the OCS book
12. In books/articles we have to read or news and other articles I read online.
13. Articles online

What do you like about your course material book?
1. Good exercises
2. The book does what is says on the tin, as it were. It goed into advanced vocab in English
3. It pushes more in the direction of academic vocabulary
4. focused and ordered
5. It's very easy
6. It's actually quite succinct
7. It can be used as a reference book
8. Simple
9. -
10. Nothing
11. It has useful lists of words that you actually need to use at some point
12. There are many useful words in these books that I really want to start using
13. Different assignments

What don't you like about your course material book?
1. Lots of words I'll never use
2. I am quite indifferent towards the book, to be perfectly honest. In relation to the study programme English Language and Culture, it is probably too much of an amalgamation of fields of language use and not specific enough when it comes to words we would actually benefit from knowing.
3. We go through it too fast and without guidance, and also the words in it are fairly superficial and not directly related to my own field
4. No practice CD Rom helped me a lot in the first year
5. It's very easy
6. The method used gets a bit repetitive after a while
7. It tends to select only one meaning/use of a word and ignores other connotations
8. The fact that I'm ashamed when I'm learning in the train because it looks like a children's book with all the pictures + it is sometimes difficult to learn because the words you have to learn are 'taught' to you via different strategies: put into context, definition given, etc.
9. –
10. There is no order, it's utter chaos
11. You have to pay money for a book which you'll use once
12. I feel like the difficulty ranges from stupidly easy words to very difficult ones
13. Huge amounts of words and phrases

What did you think of the last vocabulary test you took based on the course material book?
1. Okay

2. The vocab tests I took were ludicrous. There are probably more than a thousand words per test we had to learn, of which some fifty were asked of us on the test, in quite an obscure way.
3. It was difficult, and I remember the test asked many details about for instance statistics, but I cannot recall all of the material presented in it – which is a shame, since I would like to know more about statistics
4. Fine (been a while though, don't really remember)
5. It was aimed at a higher level than the course material
6. It was quite alright. The test was clearly based on the items in the course material book.
7. Following on my answer 18: tests ask for one particular word when several answers are possible in a certain context. However, all but this one answer are a fault.
8. I can't really remember. I passed all of them so must have been OK
9. It has been over a year, I do not really remember
10. It was hard. I have a tendency to fail them
11. It was okay
12. I like the tests for these books; they are very accurate
13. Good

What do you think of the word list the course material book provides?
1. Again; lots of words I'll never use
2. The course material book does not provide a word list as such; rather it provides chunks of words, interspersed with exersises.
3. It is rather superficial: it has basic academic words
4. bad
5. is there a word list?
6. They are useful This year, I have come across a plethora of words that I first learned whilst learning from this book
7. Word list? Do you mean index?
8. Sometimes waaaaaaaaaay too easy
9. -
10. haven't seen it
11. it has useful words in it
12. It was alright
13. what word list

What do you use the word list for/do with the word list provided in the course material book?
1. Cross out the words I already know
2. -
3. Nothing
4. Nothing
5. Nothing
6. I learn the words. Sometimes, I use the book as a reference book, looking up words that I know I have forgotten. This is quite unique, however
7. If index: I use it for reference
8. Wait, are we talking about the same thing? what word list? Just the words in the book? In every chapter you mean? I use those words to learn?
9. –
10. -

11. I'll only used them to pass the exam
12. Learn it, repeat the words I didn't know, and keep going until I knew all the words
13. ???

Do you think the course material book helped you improve your vocabulary? WHY (likert scale)

1	4	Exercise always helps
2	2	Because, as I pointed out in question 18, much of the material was quite useless to me as a serious, academically minded student
3	3	I am neutral to it: there were some useful terms, but I do not remember any words I learned because of it and now use a lot. I did find the chapter about alternatives for the verb "said" interesting, and I do use that in my writing sometimes.
4	4	The exercises help
5	3	There was some stuff in there that might be of use should I choose to study abroad
6	4	Especially academic jargon was still pretty much unknown to me. This book filled that gap
7	2	My vocabulary was already extensive, so I did not learn by heart either the English Vocabulary or Academic Vocabulary
8	3	I don't know, it is always difficult to state where your knowledge comes from. Maybe I have learned from it, but I wouldn't even know.
9	4	The book provided words that were very practical, that you'd actually use or encounter.
10	3	I just didn't like the book and I don't remember a word list
11	4	There were for instance words you could specifically use for making essays, which proved to be very useful
12	3	Expecially the academic part of the vocabulary book had quite a few useful phrases for writing papers
13	2	Huge amount of words and phrases, causing you to hardly remember any of them after you've taken the exam, instead of focusing on less words but actually remembering and using them

Could you describe your ideal vocabulary test?

1. Pretty much the way the exam already is
2. No test at all; let vocabulary use and eloquence do their jobs of either or not becoming intrinsic to a person's use of English in a more organic way, namely in the process of the written and spoken assignments of other courses, as well as oral communication exercises during the OCS and ACS courses.
3. In-depth questions, asking about more than superficial knowledge. For instance, the test would ask to use the word in a sentence or story, its morphological forms, and to describe the setting the word is appropriate in
4. Half passive half active knowledge being tested
5. The one that ACS used this year
6. It involves a range of different tasks. Ideally, it has some gap-filling exercises, perhaps some mind-mapping exercises, and it should do something new!
7. Just testing the meaning: multiple choice, otherwise: an oral exam. I think that using vocabulary in writing and speech is the best way to internalize the right use
8. Words put in context. Seems to me the most 'real' test. Especially because output is what is practices in class

9. Probably the same as it is, because that is the easiest way to test vocab. The problem is that vocab acquisition should be an ongoing process instead of a task with an end goal
10. –
11. I think the test we had was good enough
12. I like the one the course is currently using. The only thing that I'd also like is that should sometimes be a little clearer what word should be filled in. I often though that in some cases there were multiple possibilities (completely different words but would both work in that specific context) but there was only one correct answer
13. no

Have you got any final remarks about any subject regarding vocabulary teaching and learning in the English Language and Culture study?

1. No
2. All in all, vocab is obviously an important factor in academic use of English, but learning it should be a more organic process, rather than studying it actively from a book for a test. I obviously can't speak for everybody, but I doubt there are many students who feel their vocabularies have actively and drastically improved in consequence of the way learning and teaching vocab is handled during their English Language and Culture studies.
3. OCS/ACS should be more connected to other courses: in many linguistic courses we have to read texts full of words that have to do with this specific field of study and its statistics and methods. I think it would also motivate students to learn words that are useful in their research field of interest. Also, I think oral debates and discussions with these words should be more common, since these reflect the academic climate (you sometimes have to talk to people about academic subjects…)
4. Make it more than just a list of words
5. -
6. The OCS course was very nice. The ACS course, however, was also very nice right up until the moment that we were required to write and academic article. This felt very sudden and it did not match the content of the ACS course thusfar. Moreover, I feel that we were not given enough time (7 weeks) in order to fully go through the writing process. In fact, we had never written an academic article before so it felt like we were very much rushing things without explaining why we were using certain methods.
7. Root learning vocabulary is a necessary evil. Learning English through music lyrics, English subtitles and reading is much more fun but perhaps takes longer
8. Yeah, I felt that the teachers were very much searching at times as to how to instruct us and different teachers used different methods. I would like one curriculum for all classes
9. Stress the importance of learning vocab in spare time. Avoid sounding ignorant of the workload of other courses
10. I don't like it when people force you to learn new words, which is what happens at OCS/ACS
11. -
12. I just don't think the PIF right now works as it feels like a rather useless chore. This year we already changed the PIF list making it some sort of group project on Facebook which was much more fun thank making a really long word list by yourself. Also, try to make clear what kind of words people should be looking for from the start. Most students pick words that they have never heard of and probably won't remember. Perhaps try to give examples or do an in-class activity about finding good PIF words before the students start with their PIfs.

13. –