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The 'Successful' Autonomous Language Learner

The effect of vocabulary notebooks on learners' vocabulary acquisition and autonomy

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I hereby declare that this thesis is entirely my work and effort. Where other sources have been used, they have been acknowledged.

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Abstract

Although the notion of autonomy has gained a lot of attention in educational environments, there still exists a great gap between theory and practice. Being based on the idea that foreign language learners are more successful when they are allowed to actively participate in their own learning process, this thesis provides an overview of the correlation between autonomy, learner identity, and motivation, and sets out a non-exhaustive list of autonomy-enhancing methods which are applicable in the EFL classroom. The empirical study on the effect of keeping a vocabulary notebook described in this thesis attempts to substantiate the theoretical claims. Pupils in two intermediate EFL classes and in one advanced EFL class participated in the study, which covered a period of seven weeks. By providing the pupils of one of the intermediate classes with a pre-patterned 'language diary' and the remaining participants with a blank notebook, I intended to gain insight into the short-term effect of keeping a vocabulary notebook on pupils' vocabulary acquisition, and its correlation with the degree of autonomy in keeping a diary (i.e. whether either the use of a pre-patterned or blank diary is more successful) on the one hand; and into the diary's effect on pupils' experience as autonomous language learners (i.e. their sense of learner identity and motivation) on the other hand. Even though the pupils' test results revealed significant vocabulary gain, the diary in itself is not enough to enhance pupils' autonomy; in order to 'create' motivated, autonomous learners, a first requirement is to have them educated by a motivated, autonomous teacher.

Keywords: learner autonomy, learner identity, motivation, vocabulary acquisition, vocabulary notebooks

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Introduction

'Lifelong (language) learning' and 'engagement in a globalised world': two concepts one cannot imagine living without these days. In educational environments, and more specifically in the second and foreign language classrooms, the idea of autonomy has gained a lot of attention. But although foreign language learners are generally considered to be more successful when they are allowed to actively participate in their own learning process, there still exists a great gap between theory and practice concerning the implementation of autonomy-enhancing methods. Moreover, it is not entirely clear how the notions of motivation and identity can be related to the development of the successful autonomous language learner.

Since I obtained a Professional Bachelor Degree of Secondary Education in 2011 and still want to start teaching next year, finding a way to optimise the skilfulness of learners of English is dear to my heart. As a consequence, the aim of my thesis is twofold. On the one hand, it provides insight into how the implementation of autonomy-enhancing methods in the EFL classroom in secondary schools can nurture pupils' identity as learners, how this may influence their learning results, and how motivation can be regarded as a vital factor in language learning achievement. On the other hand, it will report on an empirical study measuring the effect of keeping a vocabulary notebook – or 'language diary' – as part of the autonomous learning experience. The results of this study will not only illustrate some theoretical issues raised in the former part, but also provide an insight into the diary's effect on the vocabulary acquisition of the language learner.

This thesis consists of six parts. In the first part, I will introduce the concept of 'the autonomous language learner'. To begin with, I will present a working definition of learner autonomy, which I will then discuss in the context of Critical Pedagogy. Next, I will set out an overview of possible (dis)advantages of acquiring independent language learning skills.
The second part concentrates on the pedagogical ideas and regulations concerning autonomy in the EFL classroom. In the first instance a theoretical background regarding methods that can be used for the implementation of autonomy is provided. While taking these methods into account an important question is dealt with, namely: 'To what extent does the curriculum of English permit teachers to create semi-autonomous learning environments?' On the one hand, the answers will provide a clear account of the discrepancies between theory (pedagogical regulations) and practice (teaching in the EFL classroom). On the other hand, it will become

clear that there nonetheless do exist feasible autonomy-enhancing methods – a conclusion I hope to encourage the teachers among you with.

In the third part I will scrutinise the correlation between autonomy, identity and motivation. After defining identity and motivation and their interrelationship, these concepts will be discussed in the context of autonomous language learning. Two important questions I will deal with concern:

- In what way can a greater sense of autonomy lead to a stronger sense of identity for a language learner?
- In what way does the blooming of learner identity lead to a motivating environment in which pupils are able to develop into autonomous language learners?

The fourth and fifth part respectively consist of the methodology of my case study measuring the effect of keeping a vocabulary notebook in the 3rd and 5th year of EFL and its outcomes. As mentioned in the second part, previous studies have proven the positive effects of vocabulary notebooks on learner autonomy. Since this study field has not yet been thoroughly explored in Belgium, I will try to answer the following questions:

- What is the short-term effect of keeping a language diary on pupils' vocabulary acquisition?
- What is the correlation between pupils' vocabulary acquisition and the degree of autonomy in keeping a diary – i.e. is either the use of a pre-patterned or the use of a blank diary more successful?
- What is the short-term effect of keeping a language diary on pupils' experience as autonomous language learners – i.e. on their sense of identity and motivation?
- What is the correlation between pupils' degree of satisfaction and the degree of autonomy in keeping the language diary?

This study will illustrate some of the theoretical and practical issues raised in the second part.

In the sixth and last part I will refer back to my theoretical findings and map them onto the study's outcomes. This approach will allow me to draw some general conclusions regarding the feasibility of autonomy-enhancing methods, the current study's limitations, and the additional requirements which are needed to stimulate pupils to become motivated, autonomous learners. To finish off, I will also suggest some questions for future investigation.

Even though the above-mentioned research questions and studies are initially there to provide an insight into different concepts and methods in the context of autonomy, there is another – major – goal I would like to achieve by sharing this thesis with you. I do hope that,

by the end of reading it, the teachers among you will understand that the presence of pedagogical regulations and/or time restrictions does not mean the absence of possibilities to create a (semi-) autonomous learning environment. The positive impact on the development of learners' identity and their linguistic skills cannot be neglected – however trivial the autonomy-enhancing method may appear to be at first sight, as with the vocabulary notebook. Consequently, I do hope that my current writings may provide you with a sufficient dose of motivation to turn your theoretical ideas regarding autonomy into practice.

1. The Autonomous Language Learner: In Search of a Definition

I know I cannot teach anyone anything. I can only
provide an environment in which he can learn.
Carl Rogers (1965: 389)

1.1. 'Learner autonomy': A working definition

The concept of 'learner autonomy' dates back to the 1980s, when Henri Holec set up a project to provide adults with life-long learning opportunities. By 1981 he had defined this concept as the 'ability to take charge of one's own learning' (qtd. in Little 2006: 1). Although Holec's initial definition has been of great importance in the development of the debate concerning learner autonomy, it seems almost impossible to come up with a straightforward definition of the term nowadays. As Gardner and Miller (1999: 5) point out, three reasons can be quoted to substantiate this: 'First, different writers have defined the concepts in different ways. Second, they are areas of ongoing debate and therefore definitions are continuing to mature as more discussion takes place. Third, these concepts have developed independently in different geographical areas and therefore they have been defined using different (but often similar) terminology'.

Regarding the first reason, Little (2002) notices that '[l]earner autonomy is a problematic term because it is widely confused with self-instruction'. According to Dickinson (1987: 11), this idea of self-instruction is defined as 'a neutral term referring generally to situations in which learners are working without the direct control of the teacher'. Next to that, the 'particular attitude to the learning task, where the learner accepts responsibility for all the decisions concerned with his learning but does not necessarily undertake the implementation of those decisions' (Dickinson 1987: 11) is called self-direction. An important remark regarding the notion of self-direction is that '[t]o be responsible for something does not entail having to carry out the courses of actions arising from it' (Dickinson 1987: 12). Consequently, following Dickinson's (1987: 11) stream of thought that autonomy 'describes the situation in which the learner is totally responsible for all of the decisions concerned with his learning and the implementation of those decisions', the latter may be seen as the mode of learning which implies the presence of a 'self-directed attitude'. Her findings, as she points out herself, contrast sharply with those of Holec, in that the latter made the same distinction, but applied the terms in reverse. For him, self-direction concerns a mode of learning, whereas autonomy 'merely' refers to an attitude. Yet another use of these terms can be found in Knowles's (1975) work. He 'uses the term self-direction to mean the

same as self-instruction – as well as self-planned learning, self-education, self-teaching, self-study and autonomous learning' (Dickinson 1987: 15).

Glancing through the approaches of other writers, it becomes clear that the concept of autonomy is not only regarded as an educational mode of learning, but also as a personal characteristic. Little (1990) considers learner autonomy to be 'essentially a matter of the learner's psychological relation to the process and content of learning' (qtd. in Gardner and Miller 1999: 6). Moreover, according to Kenny (1993: 436), autonomy comprises 'the opportunity to become a person'. Yet another view can be found in the work by Benson (1997), who 'defines learner autonomy as representing "a recognition of the rights of learners within educational systems" and, within the context of teaching English as a Foreign Language, as "a recognition of the rights of the 'non-native speaker' in relation to the 'native speaker' within the global order of English"' (Gardner and Miller 1999: 6). In this sense, learner autonomy can be seen as a political measure as well. Even though Benson's view definitely plays an important role in the study of autonomy and relates closely to the political history of the term, a discussion of his approach would be redundant in the context of my current study. The personal characteristics ascribed to learner autonomy by Little and Kenny, on the contrary, will often be referred to in the third part of my thesis; 'The link between autonomy, identity, and motivation'.

A last point which I would like to discuss concerns the question whether learner autonomy should be considered an educational goal or 'an approach to educational practice' (Boud 1988, qtd. in Gardner and Miller 1999: 6). Voices in favour of the former can be found in Leni Dam's work, as well as in that of David Little. Whereas Dam (1990) 'defines autonomy in terms of the learner's willingness and capacity to control or oversee her own learning' (Thanasoulas 2000), Little (2001: 30) explicitly argues that autonomy 'is the "*goal*" of developmental learning' (italics mine). Nevertheless, a nuanced version of these opinions is definitely called in order here. As Thanasoulas (2000) points out, 'autonomy is a process, not a product. One does not become autonomous; one only works towards autonomy'. This idea squares perfectly with Dickinson's (1987: 13) statement that 'we can recognise a scale of degree of autonomy. We need to recognise such a scale if we are to represent accurately the reality of language learning inside and out of educational institutions. […] [T]here is not a simple dichotomy between autonomous language learning and fully directed language learning, but […] there are a vast range of possibilities between these extremes'. Accordingly, Nunan (1997) remarks that 'it may well be that the fully autonomous language learner is an ideal, rather than a reality' (qtd. in Gardner and Miller 1999: 7)*,* quoting 'their personality,

their goals, institutional philosophy and cultural context' (Gardner and Miller 1999: 7) as modifying factors for the learner's degree of autonomy. Moreover, following Gardner and Miller's stream of thought, autonomy can only be regarded as a relative notion. Since the degree of autonomy of a single learner also tends to fluctuate 'over time and from one skill area to another' (Gardner and Miller 199: 7), I cannot but conclude that autonomy is an educational practice and goal in one – be it a goal that always has to be brought to a higher level, depending on the context.

Taking into account all the different approaches and nuanced definitions of learner autonomy (as well as those of self-instruction and self-direction), one may come to doubt the straightforwardness of the field of study concerned. However, as Dickinson (1987: 15) and Little (2002) point out, it would be redundant to invest much energy in trying to disentangle these approaches. As can be derived from the above, 'the important point is the distinction between an attitude to the learning process which recognises the learner's responsibility in learning, and a mode of learning – most conveniently called self-instruction – in which the learner takes over part, or all, of the institutional process without the direct intervention of the teacher' (Dickinson 1987: 15). Since these two characteristics seem to occur in (almost) every work on learner autonomy, they will prove to be a perfect starting point to define the notion of 'the autonomous language learner', which I will discuss next.

1.2. The autonomous language learner from a critical pedagogic point of view

In an attempt to come up with possible characteristics of the autonomous language learner, it is interesting to have a look at the various definitions and dimensions of learner autonomy once again. As Phil Benson (1997, qtd. in Thanasoulas 2000) points out, the notion of autonomy is being used in at least the following five ways:

a. for situations in which learners study entirely on their own;
b. for a set of skills which can be learned and applied in self-directed learning;
c. for an inborn capacity which is suppressed by institutional education;
d. for the exercise of learners' responsibility for their own learning;
e. for the right of learners to determine the direction of their own learning.

Whereas (c) can be regarded as being a psychological approach to the concept of autonomy, (e) clearly belongs to the field of politics. In contrast with these rather abstract dimensions, (a), (b), and (d) follow naturally from the definition of the autonomous language learner

coined by Dam (1990), in that the latter describes one as 'an active participant in the social processes of classroom learning […], an active interpreter of new information in terms of what she/he already and uniquely knows, [someone who] knows how to learn and can use this knowledge in any learning situation she/he may encounter at any stage in her/his life' (qtd. in Gardner and Miller 1999: 6), as well as from her characterisation of learner autonomy as 'a readiness to take charge of one's own learning' (Dam et al. 1990, qtd. in Gardner and Miller 1999: 6-7). Judging from these definitions, it seems drastic to state that the learner's capacity is characteristically 'suppressed by institutional education' (Benson 1997, qtd. in Thanasoulas 2000). Hence, a more nuanced version of this definition should be taken into account. As Little (1991) points out, 'learner autonomy does not mean that the teacher becomes redundant, abdicating his/her control over what is transpiring in the language learning process' (Thanasoulas 2000); an idea that is supported by Dickinson's (1987: 16-17) finding that autonomy 'may mean a learner working away in isolation, but it is more likely to describe a situation in which learners undertake responsibility for a part of their learning. Also, it may mean a learner using materials which are designed to guide his every step and leave little freedom of choice, or it may describe a situation in which the learner designs his own course and makes decisions about when and how he is going to be assessed'. Consequently, if 'creating' autonomous language learners is seen as an educational goal, teachers should provide their pupils with a suitable learning environment to foster their self-directedness.

An important philosophy of education within this line of reasoning is called Critical Pedagogy. This theory is congruent with that of Constructivism, in that it also boils down to the idea that 'the autonomous learner is a self-activated maker of meaning, an active agent in his own learning process. He is not one to whom things merely happen; he is the one who, by his own volition, causes things to happen' (Rathbone 1971, qtd. in Thanasoulas 2000). In this sense, both Constructivism and Critical Pedagogy constituted a striking breakaway from earlier philosophies like positivism and behaviourism. As Reinders (2010: 40) points outs, 'these humanist approaches [i.e. Constructivism and Critical Pedagogy] considered the learner as someone who actively shapes his or her learning experiences with the purpose of self-development and fulfilment, rather than seeing the learner as a passive container to be filled with the teacher's ideas'. This critique of regarding learners as passive containers derives directly from Paulo Freire's 'banking concept of education'. Since Freire's theory is considered to be the foundation of Critical Pedagogy (cf. e.g. Giroux 2010) and is a more recent approach than Constructivism, I will only be tackling the former with an eye on the characteristics of the autonomous language learner.

Freire introduced the notion of 'the banking concept of education' in his trail-blazing *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970). In it, he criticised the 'narration sickness' education is suffering from. 'Narration (with the teacher as narrator) leads the students to memorize mechanically the narrated content. […] Instead of communicating, the teacher issues communiqués and makes deposits which the students patiently receive, memorize, and repeat. This is the "banking" concept of education' (Freire 2005: 257). In this concept, 'knowledge is a gift bestowed by those who consider themselves knowledgeable upon those whom they consider to know nothing. Projecting an absolute ignorance onto others, a characteristic of the ideology of oppression, negates education and knowledge as processes of inquiry' (Freire 2005: 257). Wanting to do away with this 'ideology of oppression', Freire claims that the poles of contradiction – i.e. the opposition between teachers and students – should be reconciled, 'so that both are simultaneously teachers *and* students' (2005: 257). To do so, Freire proposes the 'problem-posing method', in which the educational goal of deposit-making is replaced with 'the posing of the problems of human beings in their relations to the world' (2005: 262). This method 'does not dichotomize the activity of teacher-student: she [i.e. the teacher] is not "cognitive" at one point and "narrative" at another. She is always "cognitive", whether preparing a project or engaging in dialogue with students' (Freire 2005: 263). In this context, the role of problem-posing educators is to provide their pupils with the conditions under which knowledge about generally accepted facts is superseded by knowledge acquired by reasoning.

According to Freire (2005: 265), a problem-posing educational environment encourages learners to:

- feel challenged and obliged to respond to that challenge;
- do away with mythologised, imposed knowledge;
- enter into dialogue and regard it as an act of cognition which unveils reality;
- become critical thinkers;
- be creative and reflect upon reality; 'thereby responding to the vocation of persons as beings who are authentic only when engaged in inquiry and creative transformation';
- take the people's historicity as their starting point.

In other words, there is a consensus that the autonomous learner is, also from a critical pedagogic point of view, characterised by 'a positive attitude, a capacity for reflection, and a readiness to be proactive in self-management and in interaction with others' (Little 2002). This idea aligns perfectly with Gardner and Miller's (1999: 8) finding that self-access language learning, as they prefer to call it, 'is an approach to learning language, not an

approach to teaching language'. Consequently, it is the language learners themselves who perform the roles of: planner, organiser, administrator, thinker, evaluator, self-assessor, self-motivator, partner of other learners, and peer assessor; whereas the teacher performs 'only' those of: information provider, counsellor, authentic language user, manager, materials writer, assessor, evaluator, administrator, and organiser (cf. Gardner and Miller 1999: 9).

Nevertheless, as Canagarajah remarks, it remains not only difficult to define the (critical) pedagogy to encourage autonomy or the autonomous language learner, but also dangerous. For one, '[t]heories can narrow down the perspectives from which the learning activity should be interpreted. While theories are enabling (in opening our eyes to the issues that matter in a specific activity), they can also be limiting' (Canagarajah 2005: 932). As such, we are still left with 'the challenge of learner autonomy' (Little 2002) in that we are required 'to engage with the cognitive, metacognitive, affective and social dimensions of language learning and to worry about how they interact with one another' (Little 2002); a challenge I will come back to in chapter 3.

Another important comment concerns the earlier mentioned fact that 'autonomy also includes a more political element, relating to the idea of individual freedom of choice' (Reinders 2010: 41). As applied to classroom activities, this means 'that economic and other disadvantages of certain groups in the wider population, state-led education policies, school curricula and the prescribed use of textbooks, are all examples of ways in which the development of autonomy may be hindered' (Reinders 2010: 41). Since this remark gives rise to the question whether it is even possible for an individual teacher to overcome these constraints, the second chapter will discuss to what extent the curriculum for English permits teachers to create semi-autonomous learning environments.

Having gone through the philosophy of Critical Pedagogy, it seems justified to state that, in order to 'create' autonomous learners, a problem-posing approach is required. However, as Dickinson (1987: 17) points out, 'it is true to say that because a particular instructional mode is possible does not mean that it is desirable. The question, expressed boldly as "why bother?", or more cautiously as "what are the justifications for self-instruction?" is an essential one to be answered'. Consequently, I will be glad to discuss this in the following paragraph.

1.3. Why foster independent language learning skills? Possible (dis)advantages

Since the notions of Critical Pedagogy, self-access learning, and self-instruction in language learning still do not have the same approval as traditional ways of classroom teaching, these educational approaches are likely to be questioned by those who are unknowledgeable about them. Moreover, as providing language learners with an autonomy-enhancing environment 'involves teachers in a considerable amount of preparatory work, and involves both learners and teachers in learning new techniques of instruction and in adjusting their accustomed roles' (Dickinson 1987: 18), a substantiated justification of implementing autonomy-enhancing methods is definitely in place here.

As far as David Crabbe (1993: 443) is concerned, three major reasons for promoting autonomy should be taken into account:

> The ideological argument is that the individual has the right to be free to exercise his or her own choices, in learning and other areas, and not become a victim […] of choices made by social institutions. […] The psychological argument is simply that we learn better when we are in charge of our own learning. […] The economic argument is that society does not have the resources to provide the level of personal instruction needed by all its members in every area of learning.

Whereas these arguments are rather abstract and consequently not really convincing, Dickinson (1987: 18-35) provides us with an elaborate overview of concrete advantages of self-instruction. Since her five main categories – practical reasons, individual differences among learners, educational aims, motivation, and learning how to learn foreign languages – comprise (almost) all reasons one can come up with, I will take her findings as a starting point to discuss the advantages of an autonomy-enhancing approach in the context of secondary education.

1.3.1. Practical reasons

Whereas this first category may seem to be rather far-fetched in the context of secondary education, there definitely occur 'circumstances where there is no alternative, or where any alternative involves the learner in unacceptable personal sacrifice' (Dickinson 1987: 18). Thinking of pupils who have undergone a major surgery and consequently are temporarily disabled and unable to attend classes, or of those who are due to lend a helping hand at home from time to time, or even of learners who want to go on an exchange etcetera, one can definitely acknowledge the importance of their self-instructional skills.

1.3.2. Individual differences among learners

This second justification for advocating an autonomy-enhancing learning environment can be divided into three subcategories. For one, fostering learners' autonomy may release them 'from the need for all to work at the same rate' (Dickinson 1987: 20). Since the language learning aptitude may vary to a great extent among pupils, and suggesting alternative learning styles to so-called 'slow' learners cannot always bridge this gap, self-instruction is a justified strategy to allow pupils to work at their own pace.

Next to that, an autonomy-enhancing learning environment may provide pupils with an amount of subject materials that is in keeping with their cognitive styles, as well as with their learner strategies. 'Cognitive style describes an individual's overall approach to learning, irrespective of the task, […] and learning strategy is concerned with actual activities and techniques which lead to learning' (Dickinson 1987: 20). Hence, although one learner may need to learn all grammatical rules concerning the use of tenses by heart, another one may prefer to have a look at the way in which they are contextually applied only. Of course, this does not imply that I want to belittle the importance of a well-structured language course which provides learners with the basic vocabulary and grammatical rules. However, I do believe that, as Dickinson (1987: 22) points out, 'as soon as learners begin to take off in the language it is likely that their demand for interesting content will take them beyond the confines of any course or syllabus'. In other words: a flexible approach in which pupils are persuaded to use effective strategies on the one hand, but which still encourages them to apply their preferred learning style(s) on the other, is in my opinion the perfect recipe to create responsible and successful language learners who are able to apply these strategies in their daily lives as well.

1.3.3. Educational aims and motivation

From a psychological point of view, autonomy-enhancing methods may improve learners' wellbeing in three ways. Firstly, by overthrowing the 'ideology of oppression' (cf. section 1.2) the pupils' sense of inferiority may be done away with, which in turn may lead to an increase in their motivation to actively participate in classroom activities. Secondly, this motivation may be increased by the pupils' involvement in decision making as well. As Bachman (1964, qtd. in Dickinson 1987: 25) argues, this involvement moreover fosters an 'increase in productivity [which] results from an increase in the individual's motivation to

perform effectively'. Last but not least, an encouraging teacher may be of decisive importance. As Dickinson (1987: 25) points out, 'there is evidence to support the common sense view that where learners are perceived by the teacher as committed to the achievement of learning objectives, as seeking and accepting learning objectives, as seeking and accepting responsibility, and as persons able to exercise control and self-direction, then they will behave in a way which confirms this perception' and vice versa. Since pupils thus turn out to be very sensitive to something what I would like to call 'a butterfly effect-like approach', the importance of a guiding teacher, instead of a knowledge imposing force, once again is confirmed.

As mentioned above, increasing pupils' motivation may be seen as an important advantage of the implementation of autonomy-enhancing methods. However, following Little's (2006) stream of thought, motivation may not merely be seen as a consequence of autonomy:

> According to a large body of empirical research in social psychology, autonomy – 'feeling free and volitional in one's actions' (Deci 1995, p.2) – is a basic human need. It is nourished by, and in turn nourishes, our intrinsic motivation, our proactive interest in the world around us. This explains how learner autonomy solves the problem of learner motivation: autonomous learners draw on their intrinsic motivation when they accept responsibility for their own learning and commit themselves to develop the skills of reflective self-management in learning; and success in learning strengthens their intrinsic motivation.

Since the relationship between autonomy-enhancing methods, and thus self-instruction, and motivation is all but uncomplicated, I will devote a great part of the third chapter to analysing the link between the two. Consequently, for now, my only conclusion concerns the fact that an increase of motivation is a great advantage when one acquires independent language learning skills.

1.3.4. Learning how to learn foreign languages

This final reason more or less embodies all previous justifications in that it reflects the ultimate goal of educational autonomy: to learn people how to learn. Moreover, as Rogers (1969, qtd. in Dickinson 1987: 34) points out, this learning how to learn is pre-eminently the educational objective: 'The only man who is educated is the man who has learned how to

learn; the man who has learned how to adapt and change; the man who has realized that no knowledge is secure, that only the process of *seeking* knowledge gives a base for security'.

Learning how to learn is in a sense what my case study on the effect of keeping a vocabulary notebook will be about. As with all self-instructional tasks, 'it is a matter first of developing knowledge about learning processes – and about oneself as a learner, secondly of planning learning, and thirdly of discovering and then using appropriate and preferred strategies to achieve the objectives specified by the plans' (Dickinson 1987: 34). As Flavell (1979: 906) points out, an important notion in this context is that of metacognition, in that it 'plays an important role in oral communication of information, oral persuasion, oral comprehension, reading comprehension, writing, language acquisition, attention, memory, problem solving, social cognition, and various types of self-control and self-instruction'. This phenomenon, consisting of metacognitive knowledge on the one hand and the application of metacognitive strategies on the other, allows pupils to believe for example 'that [they] (unlike [their] brother) should use strategy A (rather than strategy B) in task X (as contrasted with task Y)' (Flavell 1979: 907). Consequently, when learning about a new subject, learners have to discover their appropriate learning strategy 'through trying out the kinds of activities the teacher advises, and through trying out strategies from other learning experiences' (Dickinson 1987: 34). Hence, as Flavell (1979: 908) remarks, 'metacognitive experiences are especially likely to occur in situations that stimulate a lot of careful, highly conscious thinking: in a job or school task that expressly demands that kind of thinking'. Or in other words: autonomy-enhancing learning environments 'provide many opportunities for thoughts and feelings about your own thinking to arise and, in many cases, call for the kind of quality control that metacognitive experiences can help supply' (Flavell 1979: 908).

Finally, when pupils are learning how to learn a foreign language, it is desirable to apply learner-centred methods 'which are concerned with giving language learners opportunities to practise using the language for communicative purposes' (Dickinson 1987: 34). As Little (2002) points out, '[e]ffective communication depends on a complex of procedural skills that develop only through use; and if language learning depends crucially on language use, learners who enjoy a high degree of social autonomy in their learning environment should find it easier than otherwise to master the full range of discourse roles on which effective spontaneous communication depends'. Consequently, creating a safe environment in which pupils are allowed to communicate in small groups may be a great aid in helping them to become conscious of their own metacognitive strategies on the one hand, and of their responsibility in acquiring a foreign language on the other.

Having scrutinised possible advantages of implementing autonomy-enhancing methods in a secondary educational environment, one may come to wonder whether everything about it can be reduced to being a bed of roses. And of course the answer to that remains no, for there will always exist learners who need a close supervision and coaching on the one hand, and teachers who consider the workload to implement these teaching methods to be insurmountable on the other. Nevertheless, I believe the greatest challenge still remains teachers' and learners' ignorance regarding these methods. Consequently, at the end of this first chapter, I cannot but emphasise Gardner and Miller's (1999: 11) statement that autonomy-enhancing methods 'can function at all learning levels. [They allow] for different levels of independence among learners encompassing both teacher-directed groups of learners and virtually autonomous learners. [They allow] individualisation but also support groups. [They are] not culture specific. [They are] not age specific. In effect, self-access learning [and other methods] can benefit all language learners'.

1.4. Conclusion: The autonomous language learner

In this first chapter, I have attempted to define 'learner autonomy' and the consequences of implementing autonomy-enhancing methods in a secondary educational environment. Given the amount of possible perspectives on the concept of learner autonomy, the presented working definition remains up for discussion. Nevertheless, some general conclusions can already be drawn. For one, a consensus has been reached about the fact that the autonomous language learner is one who takes responsibility for his own learning, but still can rely on the teacher to enter into conversation about possible learning strategies. Next, the importance of an encouraging teacher has become clear. Hence, in order to achieve the advantages discussed in 1.3, a critical pedagogic teaching approach, which starts from the idea of learner-centeredness, is preferred.

Having defined the advantages of learner autonomy on the one hand, and the importance of a guiding teacher on the other, it is now time to have a look at possible methods to foster learner autonomy. Consequently, this will be tackled in my second chapter, together with the question concerning the extent to which the curriculum for English permits teachers to implement these methods.

2. Autonomy-enhancing methods and their place in the curriculum for English

*The challenge of all teaching is to integrate a genuine authority
in the facilitator with the autonomy in the learner.*
John Heron (1993: 14)

2.1. Autonomy-enhancing methods in the EFL classroom

As I concluded in the first chapter, encouraging teachers who function as a guidance, rather than an authoritarian voice, may already foster their pupils' self-confidence to become more autonomous. In this paragraph, I will discuss some autonomy-enhancing materials which can additionally be of great use in the EFL classroom. While some teachers may prefer to adapt already existing materials, others may want to design their own autonomy-enhancing project. Consequently, I will come up with ideas to suit various tastes. Since 'pedagogical goals and the specific needs of individual learners are the most important factors in considering [such] learning materials, [but] time and money are the most influential factors' (Gardener and Miller 1999: 96), I will also have a look at their advantages and disadvantages from different angles.

2.1.1. Possible additions to published materials

A quick and easy way of building up an amount of language learning materials is of course by purchasing published course books. Some obvious advantages of these publications concern that they are easily available, can be obtained very quickly, have been reviewed thoroughly, are attractively presented, are often provided for different media, etcetera (for an extended list, cf. Gardner and Miller 1999: 98-99). However, the other side of the coin is that these materials are rarely (if ever) geared to the pupils' environment on the one hand, and in general do hardly contain topical authentic texts on the other hand. Since such course books consequently do not fit the idea of being stimulating, autonomy-enhancing materials, it is preferable to make them more user-friendly for EFL learners.

As Gardner and Miller (1999) point out, encouraging pupils to bring their own authentic texts may be very effective in the context of learner autonomy. 'Little et al. (1989) list three reasons why [such] texts make useful language learning materials. They feel that the authentic texts are likely to motivate learners, promote acquisition and, if used in sufficient quantities, contribute to language immersion' (Gardner and Miller 1999: 101). So, although the implementation of this strategy may be very time consuming – for the teacher to deal with

all texts in class, as well as for the pupils to obtain a suitable text – on the one hand, and the language which is used in such texts may be repelling when the level is too high on the other hand, it will definitely bear fruit when gone about sensibly. Hence, 'the tutor's role in using authentic documents is […] to aim to help the learners to develop study techniques which can be applied to any document' (Dickinson 1987: 69).

Another method to foster learner autonomy consists of providing pupils with supporting worksheets and/or a step-by-step plan to cope with (a part of) a unit by themselves. Although designing these kinds of materials may be very time-consuming, starting from the same framework every time makes the teacher's task lighter and moreover supplies the pupils with a familiar frame of reference. Some practicalities that can guide pupils on their way are the implementation of symbols that indicate how a task should be executed, a clear overview of aims, and enough time and space for them to reflect. An example of this method, based on unit 5 of *Contact 3* (Claeys and Vanden Borre 2007), can be found in appendix 1.

Another concept in this context concerns the use of peer-assessment. Since '[c]ritical persons are more than just critical thinkers. They are able to engage critically with the world and with themselves as well as with knowledge' (Barnett 1997, qtd. in McMahon 2010: 224), preparing pupils for lifelong (autonomous) learning 'necessarily involves preparing them for the tasks of making complex judgements about their own work and that of others, and for making decisions in the uncertain and unpredictable circumstances in which they will find themselves in the future' (McMahon 2010: 224). Starting from this conviction, the UCD Centre for Teaching and Learning used peer-assessment within a negotiated curriculum in a module on training and development. Judging from their conclusions, one cannot but acknowledge the importance of this strategy. By means of peer-assessment, the students 'enhanced the quality of learning by prompting supportive sharing of ideas, perspectives, experiences and knowledge' (McMahon 2010: 235). Moreover, by reflecting on the way in which the pupils assessed one another and themselves, the identification of good practice was encouraged, as well as 'its adoption by individual members of the group' (McMahon 2010: 235). A last, and in my opinion most striking, fact about this experiment is that 'it was evident that weaker students benefited from the talents of their more knowledgeable and skilful peers to an extent not found in previous cohorts or amongst those of the same cohort who followed the standard curriculum delivery model' (McMahon 2010: 238). Consequently, the combination of peer-assessment and other self-instructional tasks turns out to have a great influence on the development of autonomous learning skills. Compared to the above-mentioned methods, peer-assessment does not burden teachers with an extra workload.

However, taking into account the temporal restrictions teachers are confronted with in secondary education, this method may be too time consuming.

A last possibility I would like to discuss involves the use of the internet in promoting language learning. In the context of CALL (computer-assisted language learning) a recent development concerns the emergence of websites like *Memrise* and *Duolingo*. These websites can be used free of charge and act like a game. Since *Duolingo* only offers a restricted amount of language learning possibilities (i.e. it provides courses of German, French, Spanish, Portuguese, and Italian; and courses of English for speakers of Spanish, Portuguese and Italian), I will only be focusing on *Memrise*. Being based on three principles – science, fun, and community – *Memrise* claims to be 'the fastest way to pick up vocabulary in any language' (Memrise Inc.). Given its great design and accessibility, the idea of learning a language with the aid of this website seems very appealing. By learning new words by means of flashcards, players obtain seeds that grow into plants in their virtual garden. By passing quizzes, they can keep on expanding their garden, and by competing against other users they can get higher in rank. The downside to the content of the website is that it is completely community-driven. Consequently, some vocabulary lists may be inconsistent and redundant. However, since everyone is free to add materials to the website, it may be a great idea to do so for teachers who want to challenge their pupils to practise certain vocabulary in their 'spare' time. Although this is a rather restrictive autonomy-enhancing method, it may foster the pupils' enthusiasm on the one hand, and lead to other activities – such as pupils designing their own flashcards – on the other.

2.1.2. Specially produced materials

Since not all learner needs can be met by using the materials or methods discussed in the above, it may be necessary to produce special materials from time to time. As Gardner and Miller (1999) point out, these materials can live up to pupils' preferred learning styles, can meet the requirements of specific cultures, can be updated regularly, are often cheaper than purchasing published schoolbooks, etcetera (for an extended list of reasons for special production of self-access materials, cf. Gardner and Miller 1999: 106). An 'extreme' example of a learner-centred approach can be found in Leni Dam's Flower Model. According to Dickinson (1987: 61) the key elements of this model entail that:

- pupils work out their own needs and interests;
- they arrange their own syllabus deriving from their own needs;

- the learners make decisions about what they are going to work on and how they are going to work;
- they make contracts with themselves and the teacher covering the work they have decided to do.

Starting from the pupils' own interests, 'the actual learning of English during [the] initial period is based on language materials brought along by the pupils' (Dickinson 1987: 62). As no course books are being used, the teacher and pupils work out posters of grammatical rules, which are hung to the walls of the classroom and serve as a reminder. To deal with texts, the pupils are provided with the following list of suggested activities:

```
┌─ read a text ──────────────────────────────────────┐
↑  find headings/ pictures to go with the text        ↓
└─ write a new text (another pupil) ───────────────────┘
   (A possible development would be to combine the two texts.)


┌─ make a list of catchwords to a text ───────────────┐
↑  make a summary of the text from the catchwords      ↓
└─ let another pupil make/ write a new text ───────────┘


┌─ mix a cut-up text ─────────────────────────────────┐
   put it in order
   find headings/ make drawings/ find pictures
↑  write a new text (a new pupil)                       ↓
   dramatise
└─ write down the play ───────────────────────────────┘


   (In the same way the following activities can be expanded:
   -   hypothesising/ predicting/ suggesting
   -   translating text into poems/ slogans/ single words
   -   translations.)
```

Figure 2.1: *Dam's Flower Model – Suggested text activities (Dickinson 1987: 63).*

After having tried out various activities, the pupils have to report to the rest of the class and reflect about the activities' usability. Once again the results of this discussion are written down on posters. In a next stage, next to deciding on the content of a topic suggested by the teacher, pupils also have to specify their objectives with help from the teacher. In a last stage, 'after some months of English, pupils are asked to work out what they wish to achieve over the next 20 lessons. […] Each pupil writes down what he wishes to achieve […] and groups are formed on the basis of these lists' (Dickinson 1987: 65). At that moment, a schedule is drawn up and agreed upon in the groups, which will be executed accordingly.

A great advantage of this approach is that 'in this scheme the overall language learning aim is […] to develop the communicative competence of the pupils [and] in addition, here the pupils are being helped towards autonomy in their learning' (Dickinson 1987: 65). Not only do the pupils feel encouraged to reflect on what they have been doing and how possible problems may be solved, but by starting from their own environment they feel enthusiastic and satisfied with their own learning. However, even though this approach, and thus producing special materials, sounds very promising in the context of enhancing learner autonomy, one must acknowledge some severe disadvantages. For one, Gardner and Miller (1999: 105) point out that '[i]f undertaken by novices the results of materials production can be less user-friendly, less useful and less accurate than other sources of materials. In turn, this can have a demoralising effect on learners and staff'. Next to that, '[i]t is important to set realistic goals for materials production; this may, however, limit the amount that can be produced' (Gardner and Miller 1999: 105). Toning down the (hopefully received) enthusiasm of pupils may consequently be of great importance in a Flower Model-approach. Although these difficulties may be easily done away with on the principle that a skilled teacher should be able to overcome them, one cannot ignore that 'producing good materials can be very time consuming [and] time and effort need to be put into organising and coordinating production efforts' (Gardner and Miller 1999: 105). Consequently, working together with fellow teachers is recommended to lighten the task.

Another approach consists of providing generic materials. In contrast to materials with a specific language learning content, these means 'show learners procedures which they can continue to use long after they have finished with formal education' (Gardner and Miller 1999: 112). Hence, generic materials contain instructions and suggestions about how to deal with subject matters, but 'do not provide answer keys or feedback to learners' (Gardner and Miller 1999: 112). Since such materials challenge learners to 'select the language content to which they will apply the generic procedures [and] to reflect on their learning and make decisions about whether to continue using, to adapt or to change procedures' (Gardner and Miller 1999: 112), they encourage them to become independent, critical thinkers. Consequently, this strategy perfectly fits the idea of enhancing autonomy with a view on lifelong language learning.

Nonetheless, before introducing generic worksheets or other materials in the classroom, teachers definitely must be able to estimate their pupils' level. Since '[g]eneric materials demand more of learners than other kinds of materials [in that they] need to find content, they need to learn how to apply a procedure, they need to find their own ways of

checking their performance and they need to reflect on what they have done and learned in order to make decisions about further uses of the materials' (Gardner and Miller 1999: 112), such a 'do-it-yourself kit' may be repellent for learners who are not very independent yet. Consequently, a steady transition from guided self-instructional activities to the implementation of generic materials is recommended. Another pitfall that should be taken into account concerns the extra amount of workload for pupils which these materials may lead to. Hence, a balance should be found between implementing this strategy in classroom activities on the one hand, and at home on the other. A clear example of a generic material in the context of vocabulary learning is the language diary I designed for my case study, the intention of which I will get back to in chapter 4.

2.1.3. Autonomy-enhancing methods: The importance of meeting learners' needs

Having discussed some autonomy-enhancing methods and materials, I cannot but acknowledge that these represent just some shells in an ocean of possibilities. Additionally, I should emphasise that the 'best' method or the 'best' provider of materials does not exist. Although an eclectic approach may be encouraged 'because it provides the variety that makes self-access learning more stimulating for learners' (Gardner and Miller 1999: 96), what should be aimed at is an approach that suits the needs and interests of the audience. Hence, following Gardner and Miller's (1999: 107) idea that '[a]s users of the materials they can comment on user-friendliness, usefulness and how appropriate materials are', the most important thing to take into account when designing an autonomy-enhancing learning environment is the feedback of the learners themselves. While one pupil may be fond of playing *Memrise*, another one may have an aversion of computer games but be fond of keeping a tangible vocabulary booklet – which brings me back to the importance of the learners' feeling of commitment in the process of becoming (more) autonomous. Hence, involving them in the development of materials, as well as in the evaluation of provided materials, 'moves further towards the goal of empowering the learners with more responsibility for their own language learning' (Gardner and Miller 1999: 107). Unfortunately, a question that consequently arises is: 'To what extent does the curriculum of English permit this kind of approach?' – a question I will tackle in the next paragraph.

2.2. The role of the curriculum of English in creating semi-autonomous learning environments

Since the Belgian educational system, and consequently teaching in general, relies heavily on the curriculum, it is necessary to map my own findings concerning learner autonomy onto the requirements of the curriculum for English. As I stated above, a gradual change from guided self-instructional activities to the use of completely learner-centred materials is recommended. Hence, I will have a look at the curriculum for the first level of English first, and then continue with those for the second and third level. An important remark is that I will only be discussing the curricula for English of General Secondary Education according to the VVKSO ('Flemish Association of Catholic Secondary Education'), and will not be focusing on the one which relates to modern languages as main subject. By means of doing so, a straightforward evolution should become clear.

Glancing through the curriculum for the first level, some clear references to the fostering of learner autonomy can be distinguished. From the introductory part on, emphasis is laid on the idea that learners should be efficient users of language; receptive as well as productive. 'This entails that pupils, like anticipated by the curricula, final attainment levels, and the Common European Framework of Reference, learn how to execute varying communicative "language tasks" with an increasing degree of complexity and a growth in autonomy' (VVKSO 2011: 6; translation mine). Further on, in the overview of general objectives, one can read that 'by executing language tasks, pupils learn to apply learner strategies which allow them to develop their language learning skills and hence to become more and more autonomous' (VVKSO 2011: 12; translation mine). To encourage this, the curriculum provides a clear overview of possibilities to differentiate regarding the four skills. Next to that, a separate section is devoted to a discussion of the enhancement of autonomy in the first level. Following the new final attainment levels that are recommended by the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment, the possibilities listed in the curriculum concern:

- guided independent learning; 'pupils determine their own pace and timing, and evaluate themselves by means of correction keys' (VVKSO 2011: 64; translation mine);
- corner work by means of a contract;
- pair work which allows pupils to help each other out, to compare their results and/or to correct one another's findings;
- room for self-reflexion.

By means of a marginal comment it is pointed out that 'the real portfolio work is only dealt with in the second level of secondary education. Nevertheless, pupils can already list issues which they encounter problems with, vocabulary they want to develop, and points of particular interest they want to deal with autonomously at home or in class' (VVKSO 2011: 65; translation mine). In addition to this section, a part on differentiation is included in the curriculum is well. As it is an 'open curriculum', it becomes clear that much of its interpretation is teacher-dependent. Consequently, teachers are 'burdened' with a severe responsibility in creating autonomy-enhancing learning environments that suit the learners' needs.

Scrutinising the content of the curriculum for the second level, one cannot find many additional guidelines regarding the implementation of autonomy-enhancing methods. In the section on learner autonomy, however, some refined suggestions can be discovered. For one, greater emphasis is laid on the idea that learners should get 'the chance to choose assignments or learner materials from an already existing provision. Sometimes they judge themselves or their peers, or reflect on their approach and results. They do this by taking into account certain well-explained criteria' (VVKSO 2012: 87; translation mine). Nevertheless, it is pointed out that whole-class teaching still remains significant in certain situations. In addition to the remarks on guided independent learning in the curriculum for the first level, a clear example of this strategy is provided. This method is based on three phases: firstly, the learner orientates himself on the assignment and draws up a plan to execute it; secondly, he executes the assignment; and thirdly, he reflects upon his work and learns to assess his own strengths and weaknesses. Next to a developed example of this strategy, a clear step-by-step plan which to introduce the concept of a personal development portfolio with is provided as well. Hence, this curriculum definitely can serve as a guidance to teachers who want to foster their pupils' autonomy.

Even though the curricula for the first and second level already claim to be 'open to interpretation', the curriculum for the third level even goes a step beyond. In this stage, all subject matters and linguistic situations are free to be selected by the teachers in charge. Consequently, more attention is paid to guidelines concerning the implementation of autonomy-enhancing methods on the one hand, and evaluation techniques on the other. In the section on learner autonomy, it is significant to discover that the curriculum aligns perfectly with my earlier discussion of critical pedagogy. For one, teachers 'remain the professionals who can take in the whole process of learning, indicate different learning possibilities, and help pupils to achieve their goals. […] They share this responsibility with their pupils. The

latter consequently should be aware of their assignment in the third level' (VVKSO 2004: 57; translation mine). Next, it is also acknowledged that 'teaching English in the third level should be aimed at the acquirement of strategies and metacognition' (VVKSO 2004: 57; translation mine). To enforce these statements, some clear-cut methods are provided. Some of the ideas to involve pupils in their learning process that are brought to the fore concern: to let them work by means of the above-mentioned 'planning-executing-reflecting' approach, to allow them the freedom to bring texts to class that suit the contents of the course, to let them have a say in the planning of certain activities, to provide them with opportunities for self-evaluation and peer-assessment, and so on (for an extended list, cf. VVKSO 2004: 57-64). One activity I would like to emphasise in this context entails the keeping of a language portfolio. As is set out in the curriculum, according to the Common European Framework of Reference such a portfolio consists of:

- a language biography which entails a personal record of the pupil's language learning experience and progress;
- a language passport which provides an overview of the pupil's language skills;
- a language dossier which contains a selection of materials to illustrate the pupil's achievements.

Since this portfolio is a continual work in progress, it provides an interesting opportunity for pupils to reflect on their own achievements at a given moment in time, and clearly demands a high level of autonomy.

By glancing through the regulations set out in these curricula, one can already notice an evolution regarding the attention that is paid to autonomy-fostering methods. Hence, a similar evolution can be found while going through the final attainment levels. While in the curriculum for the first level most objectives concern descriptive and transcriptional tasks, a gradual increase of evaluating tasks can be noticed in the curriculum for the second and in that for the third level. What also comes to the fore is the rising amount of required attitudes concerning the willingness to use, and to read and listen to, texts in English. Consequently, the curricula seem to claim that an increase in autonomy goes hand in hand with an increase in motivation. I will be glad to go deeper into this matter in the next chapter.

2.3. Conclusion: Autonomy-enhancing methods and their place in the curriculum for English

Having discussed some clear-cut strategies to foster learner autonomy on the one hand, and the way in which the curricula allow the implementation of these strategies on the other hand, I cannot but acknowledge that I am pleasantly surprised. Despite the fact that the ideas of autonomy and critical pedagogy are fairly new in the field of education, the curricula have clearly been adapted accordingly very rapidly. As mentioned in the above, teachers of English are free to implement subject matters and methods which they think suit their audience best. Hence, even though applying these methods may mean an extra workload for teachers, the curriculum can no longer be used as an excuse to apply a directive style. Since the curricula for English completely back up Kenny's (1993: 431) idea that: 'Where autonomy is at work, the curriculum becomes a way of organizing what learners want to do. This validates the learners' voices, and is emancipating, no matter what languages are being used', it is time to get all teachers convinced to embrace a learner-centred, autonomy-enhancing approach as well.

3. The link between autonomy, identity, motivation, and achievement

> *Given motivation, it is inevitable that a human being will learn*
> *a second language if he is exposed to the language data.*
> Pit Corder (1981, qtd. in van Lier 1996: 98)

3.1. Motivation and identity: in search of a definition

As I stated in chapter 1, increasing pupils' motivation may be regarded as an important advantage of the implementation of autonomy-enhancing methods. However, since motivation may not merely be seen as a consequence of autonomy, a more nuanced discussion about the link between these two concepts is appropriate here. Next, I will also relate the concept of motivation to the notion of learner identity.

3.1.1. Motivation

Although motivation is a rather slippery concept, 'experts and amateurs alike agree unanimously that motivation is a very important, if not *the* most important factor in language learning' (van Lier 1996: 98). Over the years, the field of study has shifted its focus 'from the emphasis on *quantity* of motivation and the antecedent of integrativeness […] to an exploration of various *qualities* of motivation' (Ortega 2009:175). Of great importance in the current approach is the theory of self-determination. This theory 'construes humans as volitional beings who are growth-oriented, that is, predisposed to life-long learning and development' (Ortega 2009: 175) and entails that human behaviour 'is posited to be guided by the drive to self-determine our actions and activities' (Ortega 2009: 175). Although this idea of self-determination fully predicts the earlier finding that pupils who perceive their teacher as authoritarian and controlling are less motivated, having a look at the other theoretical foundations of motivation is everything but redundant.

A good starting point to do so is by analysing Dickinson's (1987: 29) diagram based on Stern's (1983) discussion of Gardner's (1975) initial model of motivation. In figure 3.2, four main components of motivation can be distinguished: group-specific attitudes, learner's motives, affective factors, and extrinsic and intrinsic motivation. The first category, group-specific attitudes, refers to 'the attitudes of the learner toward the community of speakers of the target language' (Dickinson 1987: 31). As an increase in the learner's self-confidence and proficiency may lead to a more positive attitude towards the foreign language and its community, the underlying principle is to 'close the gap or discrepancy between the actual self and an ideal self, who in highly […] motivated individuals happens to have been

conceived as [the speaker of a foreign language] self' (Ortega 2009: 189). Of course, an important role in promoting such a favourable attitude is attributed to the teacher and the materials he employs. A non-exhaustive list of possible autonomy-enhancing strategies and materials can be found in chapter 2.

Approaching the concepts of integrative and instrumental motivation as being markers of motivational intensity, I cannot but agree with Dickinson's choice to regard them as a second (quantitative) category of motivation. However, two remarks should be added. For one, integrative motivation, which is 'the desire to be accepted by the community of speakers of the target language' (Dickinson 1987: 31), closely relates to the component of group-specific attitudes. Next to that, both these 'types' of motivation – with instrumental motivation being goal-related – may occur at the same time and in one and the same learner. Hence, these notions seem to overlap with all categories proposed, and moreover align perfectly with the qualitative concepts of extrinsic and intrinsic motivation which I will get back to below. An important comment in this context has been brought to the fore by Csikszentmihalyi and Rathunde (1993). According to them, 'most motivational theories have focused on *past* and *future* sources of motivation, and have thereby ignored *present* or emergent sources' (van Lier 1996: 105), as can be derived from table 3.1.

Past	Present	Future
drives, needs, learning, or other responses programmed in the individual	enjoyment of performance in the present, intrinsic motivation, emergent motivation (=FLOW)	goals in directing action; instrumental, integrative

Table 3.1: *Sources of motivation (van Lier 1996: 105).*

Csikszentmihalyi and Rathunde emphasise the importance of current learner investment, or 'flow experience', as is shown in Csikszentmihalyi's (1985) dynamic construct. As can be derived from figure 3.1, this 'flow' is the outcome of a perfect balance between the learner's skills and the challenges he is exposed to. When these challenges are over one's head or, in contrast, do not live up to one's needs, worry and anxiety are the respective consequences. As I will clarify later, this aligns perfectly with the idea of having to seek 'a responsible course of action which balances intrinsic and extrinsic resources and constraints, and the needs and goals of the individual with the needs and goals of society' (van Lier 1996: 99).
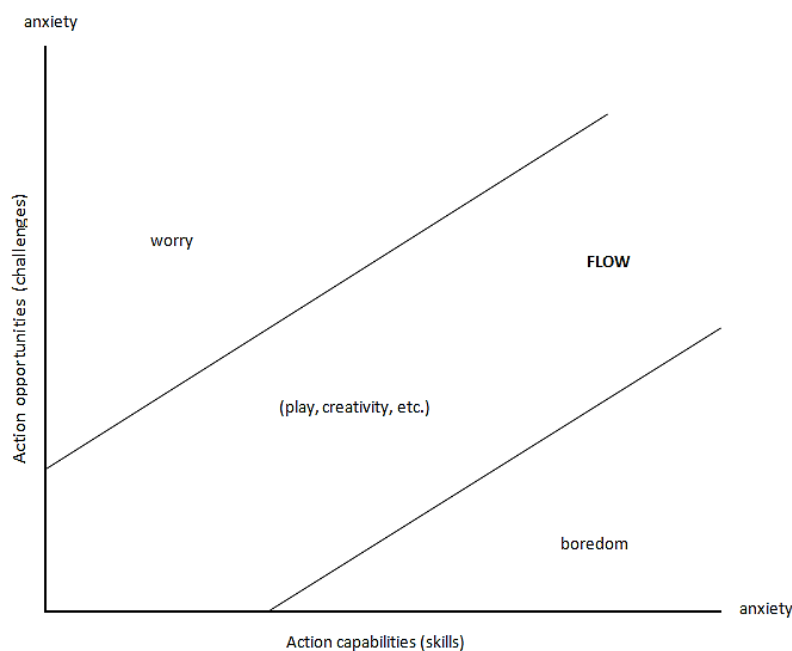
Figure 3.1: *Csikszentmihalyi's (1985) dynamic construct (van Lier 1996: 106).*

With regard to affective factors, 'Gardner and Smythe found that interest in foreign languages correlated with success in language learning as did anomie, which refers to feelings of dissatisfaction with one's role in society, and need achievement, which is a measure of one's need to succeed in everything one does' (Dickinson 1987: 31). In contrast, feelings of ethnocentrism, authoritarianism, and machiavellianism have a negative connotation in this context. To sum up, these affective factors comprise all emotions that are positively or negatively related to achievement in language learning. Once again, however, the question arises whether this concept does not belong to the field of extrinsic and intrinsic motivation.

Approaching motivation from a qualitative point of view, one can regard it as 'an interplay between *intrinsic* (innate) and *extrinsic* (environmental) factors' (van Lier 1996: 99). Since 'intrinsically motivated activity is inherent in the nature of life' (van Lier 1996: 99), I regard learners of all ages to be curious, challenge-seeking creatures that want to fulfil a certain learning-urge. Next to that, however, there exist regulations and requirements imposed by society, which can be considered as being extrinsic demands that do not always live up to an individual's needs. By following van Lier's (1996: 99) stream of thought that '[i]n the best of worlds, intrinsic and extrinsic motivations act in concert, or at least in peaceful coexistence. In less than perfect worlds (including terrible ones), extrinsic demands interfere with, or kill off, intrinsic motivations, reducing the individual to carrying out externally imposed actions, to forced labor, essentially', it once again becomes clear that, in our current educational system, creating a balanced learning environment in which the needs and goals of the

language learner meet those of society should be aimed at. The examples provided by Dickinson (cf. figure 3.2) to do so align perfectly with the examples of autonomy-enhancing methods and materials which I discussed in chapter 2, with trouble shooting being 'a regular classroom session in which students are encouraged to specify just what they find difficult in their learning' (Dickinson 1987: 33).
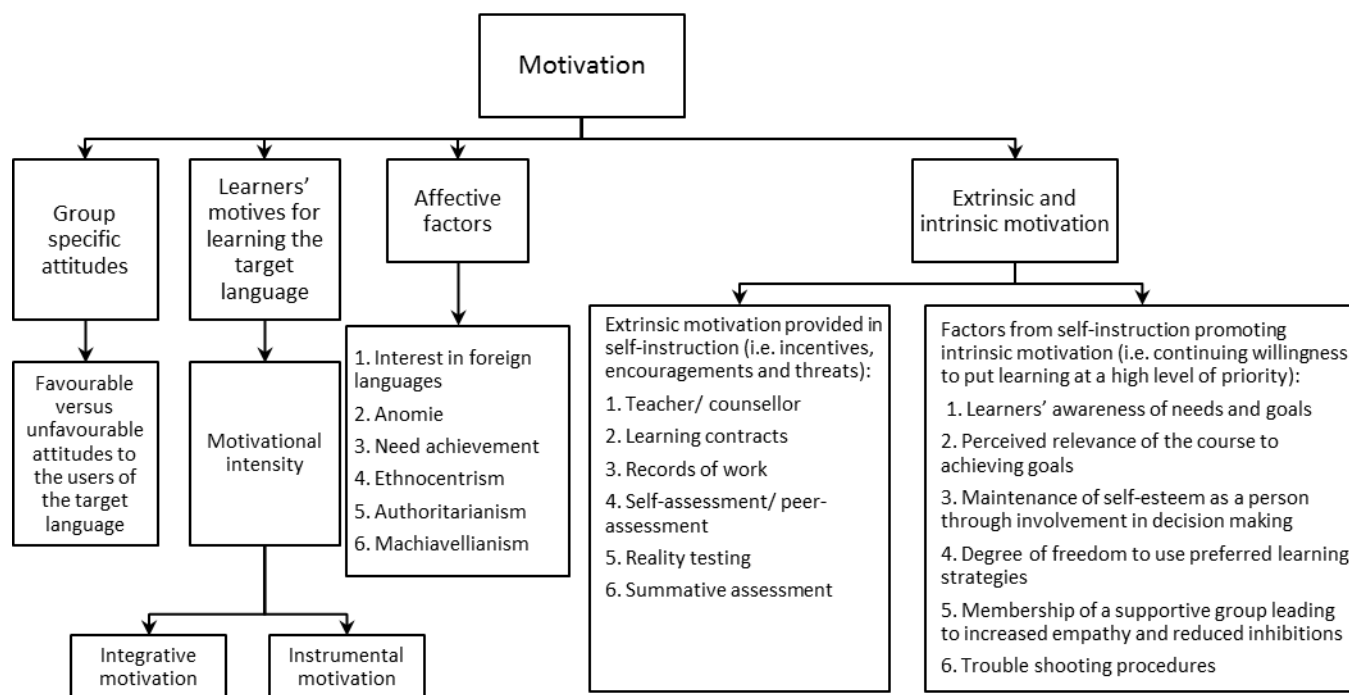
Figure 3.2: *Analysis of motivation (Dickinson 1987: 30).*

In the present field of study, the intrinsic-extrinsic division is universally agreed upon and regarded as the foundation of self-determination theory, which was introduced by Deci and Ryan in 1985. According to them, intrinsic motivation, extrinsic motivation, and amotivation lie on a continuum from self-determinedness to non-self-determinedness. Regarding the first 'category' of motivation, Deci and Ryan (1991, qtd. in van Lier 1996: 108) point out that three innate needs that foster intrinsic motivation can be distinguished: '*Competence* involves understanding how to attain various external and internal outcomes and being efficacious in performing the requisite actions; *relatedness* involves developing secure and satisfying connections with others in one's social milieu; and *autonomy* refers to being self-initiating and self-regulating of one's own actions' (italics mine). According to Deci and Ryan (1990), by means of translating these needs into goals, either individually or through interaction with the group, learners will seek challenges and develop a sense of self-concept or learner identity. Hence, I will get back to this notion of learner identity in paragraph 3.1.2.

The second aspect, that of extrinsic motivation, is divided into four types. According to the degree in which the 'other-regulation' can become 'self-regulation', Deci and Ryan (1990) make a distinction between the following types of regulation:

- *External regulation* is the least self-determined form of extrinsic motivation. An example provided by Deci and Ryan (1990) concerns the wish for praise. In this sense, the behaviour is initiated by another person, most probably the teacher in a classroom context, and is highly reward- or punishment-driven.

- *Introjected regulation* 'involves internalized rules or demands that pressure one to behave and are buttressed with threatened sanctions (e.g. guilt) or promised rewards (e.g. self-aggrandizement)' (Deci and Ryan 1991, qtd. in van Lier 1996: 111). The most important difference between this type and the former one is that no physically present authority is required here. Although this form of extrinsic motivation consequently finds itself in the learner, it does certainly not stem from his innate needs. The example provided by Deci and Ryan (1990) concerns a student who does not want to be late for class, in order to avoid feeling guilty.

- *Identified regulation* finds itself on the verge of extrinsic and intrinsic motivation. If the learner identifies with a certain activity, and hence has come to value it, his behaviour is in keeping with his own convictions. Consequently, I cannot but agree with van Lier's (1996: 112) comment that in the example of 'a student who does extra work in mathematics because it is important for him or her to continue to be good in math […], intrinsic and extrinsic motivation may have converged so that external goals (being good at math, and obtaining high grades and scholarships) and internal needs (competence, and so forth) form one unity'.

- Being 'the most developmentally advanced form of extrinsic motivation' (Deci and Ryan 1991, qtd. in van Lier 1996: 112), *integrated regulation* refers to activities that have become fully self-determined. The nuanced distinction Deci and Ryan (1990) make between integrated motivation and intrinsic motivation entails that the former concerns activities that lead to highly valued results, whereas the latter involves activities that are valuable en interesting in themselves. Since the presence of an intrinsic interest nevertheless seems inevitable to execute the former activities, this integrated regulation clearly is the last step in Deci and Ryan's (1990) so-called 'organismic integration process' and can easily be linked to the previously mentioned concept of intrinsic motivation.

Next to these concepts of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, Deci and Ryan (1990) mention that an overload of externally controlled actions, which do not align with the learner's intrinsic motivation at all, only leads to amotivation. All these notions can be presented as following:
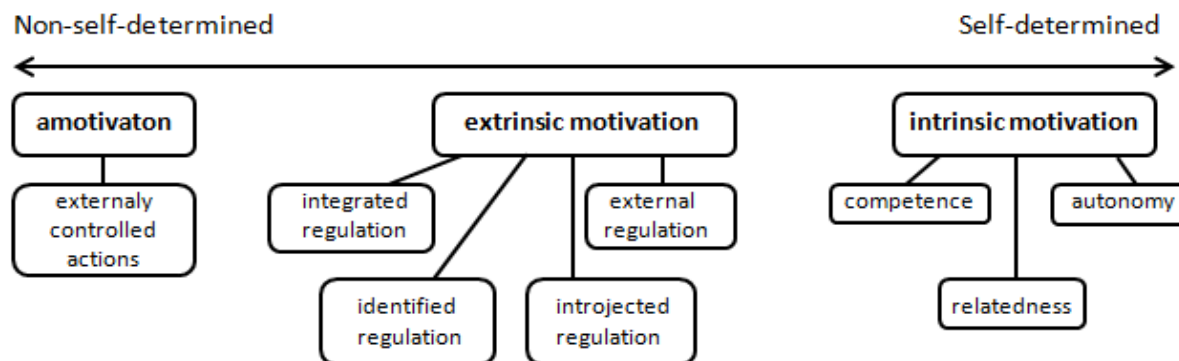
Figure 3.3: *Motivation/self-determination continuum.*

This representation of a continuum from external to internal motivation proves very truthful, in that both aspects 'must work in concert to stimulate learning' (van Lier 1996: 113), rather than oppose one another. Hence, 'externally controlled actions can only be beneficial if they gradually fall in step with intrinsically motivated actions, so that other-regulation can become self-regulation' (van Lier 1996: 113). As a consequence, an important task for teachers is to stimulate their pupils' intrinsic motivation, so as to get the most out of their interests and curiosity. As van Lier (1996: 113) points out, '[n]ot doing so is like sailing into the wind'.

As can be derived from the notion of external regulation, a great pitfall in this context is the use of 'surrogate motivators', which severely undermine intrinsic motivation. When you reward learners for their behaviour, 'you tend to reduce children's interest in performing those behaviors for their own sake' (Sternberg 1990, qtd. in van Lier 1996: 116). Consequently, I hope to have made clear that a critical approach of the concept of motivation is anything but redundant. As van Lier (1996: 121) frankly states it: '[P]roviding stickers and grades, and a multitude of other superficial devices […] at best relate to learning in the way that the supermarket version of "have a nice day" relates to wishing someone well, or a TV cooking show relates to a family dinner'. Hence, the methods and materials discussed in the previous chapter once again prove their value in trying to fit the learner's innate needs and, as such, their self-directedness and autonomy.

3.1.2. Identity

As can be derived from the above, learner motivation may be regarded as an organic process in that it emerges through the interaction between intrinsic (i.e. self-regulated) and extrinsic (i.e. other-regulated) factors. Hence, as Ushioda (2011: 12) points out, a 'person-in-context relational view' of motivation is preferred. In her argument, she pleas for:

> a focus on the agency of the individual person as a thinking, feeling human being, with an identity, a personality, a unique history and background, with goals, motives and intentions; a focus on the interaction between this self-reflective agent, and the fluid and complex web of social relations, activities, experiences and multiple micro- and macro-contexts in which the person is embedded, moves and is inherently part of (Ushioda 2011: 12-13).

From this point of view, an autonomy-enhancing environment is regarded as an important impetus to create 'fully rounded' persons who are able to 'express their own identities through the language they are learning – that is, to be and to become themselves, so that, as Little (2004: 106) puts it, "what they learn becomes part of what they are"' (Ushioda 2011: 13-14). Linking this to Deci and Ryan's (1990) above-mentioned conviction that self-determined learners will develop a sense of self-concept, one can derive that the interaction between motivation and learner identity is twofold: on the one hand, learner identity determines one's innate needs and thus intrinsic motivation, while on the other hand a motivational environment fosters the further development of one's learner identity.

An interesting project in this context has been carried out by Legenhausen (1999). Having analysed the conversations held by German children on the one hand, and Danish children on the other, he argues that:

> whether the classroom is seen as an integrative constituent part of the life surrounding it, or is seen as separate from real life, will have a major impact on the kinds of target language communication that take place in the classroom, and on the degree to which those learning the language are enabled to 'speak as themselves' instead of merely behaving as 'language learners' practising language (Legenhausen 1999, qtd. in Ushioda 2011: 15).

This aligns perfectly with van Lier's (1996) findings concerning authenticity in language classrooms. As he points out, classroom language can be easily distinguished from language use elsewhere. Hence, '[t]he fact that classroom language looks and sounds like classroom language is often taken as evidence of the artificiality of language lessons, and this in turn can then be used as an explanation for the lack of success of language instruction' (van Lier 1996:

123). Since this implies that classroom language is unnatural, 'the classroom must try to be less like a classroom, and more like some other place. The people in the classroom must speak and write as if they were somewhere else' (van Lier 1996: 123).

Following the same stream of thought, Richards (2006) argues that 'in order to understand whether and how "real conversations" may occasionally permeate teacher-student classroom talk, the analytical lens needs to focus on aspects of identity as these are dynamically constructed in the developing discourse' (Ushioda 2011: 16). Starting from Zimmerman's (1998) proposal for different categories of identities, Richards (2006: 15) makes a distinction between the following aspects:

- The *discourse identity* is 'integral to the moment-by-moment organization of the interaction' (Zimmerman 1998, qtd. in Richards 2006: 15). As such, it relates to the way in which participants engage themselves to particular discourse roles (i.e. listener, questioner, challenger,…).

- The *situated identity* 'is relevant to particular situations' (Richards 2006: 15) and concerns the way in which participants live up to contextually accepted identities. In the classroom this entails the identities of teacher and student, whereas doctor-patient identities are most likely to occur in the context of a hospital.

- The *transportable identity* is the least predictable one, in that it refers to 'identities that are usually visible, that is, assignable or claimable on the basis of physical or culturally based insignia which furnish the intersubjective basis for categorization' (Zimmerman 1998, qtd. in Richards 2006: 15). During an English class, a teacher may for example make relevant that she is a mother of two teenage sons, a keen volleyball player, or a fanatical KV Mechelen supporter.

The last aspect of identity, that of being transportable, turns out to be the most important one in the context of establishing a motivational classroom environment. Allowing pupils to connect learning contents with their own transportable identities (such as being a basketball fan, an art lover, a piano player,…) demands 'a much higher level of personal involvement, effort and investment from them than traditional teacher-student talk' (Ushioda 2011: 16). This concept of transportable identities aligns perfectly with Legenhausen's (1999) finding that the worlds in and outside the classroom should be closely related to each other.

However, authenticity cannot simply be passed on by means of learning materials and methods. 'As Sartre says in *Being and nothingness*, like individuality, such authenticity is not given, it has to be *earned* (1957: 246)' (van Lier 1996: 128). Since authentication is moreover 'a personal process of engagement, and it is unclear if a social setting could ever be clearly

shown to be authentic for every member involved in it' (van Lier 1996: 128), working towards an authentic classroom environment that provides room for all learner identities is an intensive and continuous task. Once again, the teacher possesses a privileged status in this process, for, as van Lier (1996: 128) points out, 'it is reasonable to suggest that a teacher's authenticity may stimulate authenticity in the students as well'. Nevertheless, an important remark should be added. Since 'transportable identities by definition extend beyond the physical boundaries of the classroom and beyond teacher-student roles and relationships' (Ushioda 2011: 17), some pupils may be put off by this approach if it is imposed upon them. As van Lier (1996: 125) points out, 'authenticity must go together with morality, or social responsibility. In the classroom, authenticity relates to processes of self-actualization, intrinsic motivation, respect and moral integrity in interpersonal relations, and so on'. Hence, only if pupils are left autonomous to expose the identity-aspects of their own choice, they will be motivated to express themselves. As can be derived from figure 3.4, this rounds out the autonomy-identity-motivation circle.
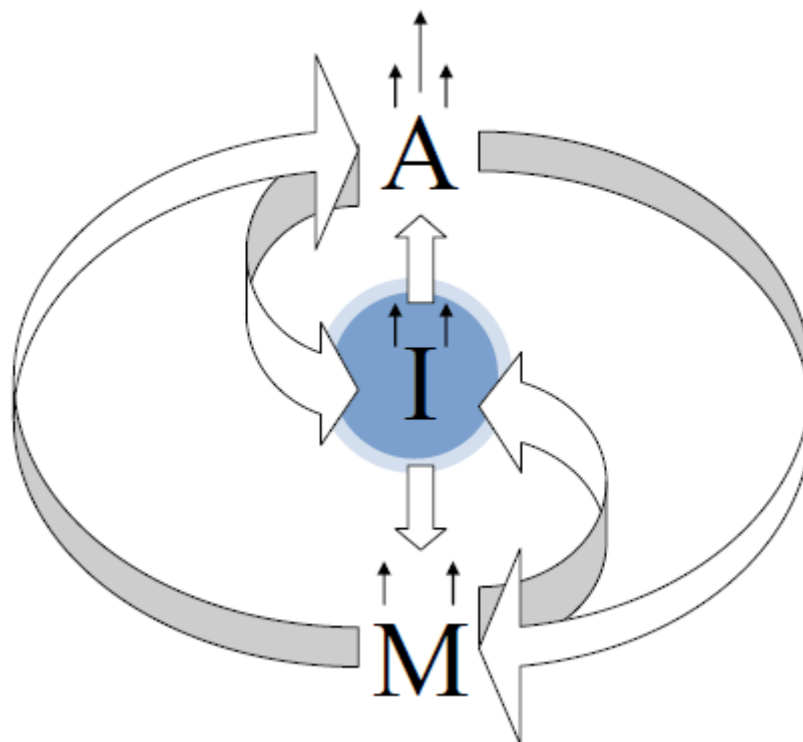
Figure 3.4: *The A.I.M.-model: the link between autonomy, identity, and motivation (Seberechts 2013).*

3.2. An A.I.M.-centred environment to enhance learners' achievements

One cannot get round the fact that our current society is strongly directed at the notion of achievement. As Deci and Ryan (1992, qtd. in van Lier 1996: 117) point out, 'individuals' personal value may be judged, even if inadvertently, in terms of their performance. To the degree that this is so, evaluations, even when they are positive and are not accompanied by rewards, surveillance, or deadlines, are likely to be experienced as highly controlling'. As I brought to the fore in chapter 1, the implementation of autonomy-enhancing methods allows pupils to employ their preferred learning strategies, in this sense enhances their feeling of well-being and motivation, and accordingly fosters their productivity. To complete the information I provided there, I will now briefly touch upon the roles of motivation and identity in this process.

As is seconded by the above-mentioned theory of self-determination, feedback from other individuals 'can enhance a person's knowledge of success but only if the person feels that the behavior was self-determined, and the context was one which facilitated autonomy' (van Lier 1996: 120). Hence, a true feeling of achievement can only come about when learners' activities are bound to their intrinsic motivation and, by extension, their identity. In addition, 'external achievement, as measured via various forms of assessment such as tests, is only effective, from the personal perspective, if the learner buys into it, and does not perceive it as controlling' (van Lier 1996: 121). As mentioned above, this intrinsic motivation starts out as an entity of innate needs and curiosity, but gradually gets influenced by extrinsic factors as the learner matures. Deci and Ryan (1992, qtd. in van Lier 1996: 118) mention three sets of factors that influence this differentiation of intrinsic motivation:

- the realization of the child's abilities to the task demands (cf. figure 3.1);
- the affordances available in the environment;
- the degree to which the social context is supportive of autonomy versus controlling behaviour.

Hence, there are different ways in which a classroom environment can influence pupils' intrinsic motivation and thus their personal achievements. Self-regulation and self-determination being key-concepts in the fostering of personal achievement, the earlier mentioned principles and strategies are not to be disregarded if we want to provide our pupils with the possibility to become life-long autonomous language learners.

3.3. Conclusion: The link between autonomy, identity, motivation, and achievement

In this chapter, I provided an overview of some theoretical approaches regarding motivation and identity, and their link with autonomy. Although the notions discussed are anything but unequivocal to define, they are clearly correlated with each other. Once again my findings boil down to the idea that, in order to stimulate learners' motivation and autonomy, the pupils' own identity should be put at the centre of the teaching/learning process. Consequently, a great role is ascribed to authentic teachers themselves, in that they, together with their pupils, have to work towards an environment in which learners are allowed to cultivate their intrinsic motivation, as well as to re-adjust it by the integration of extrinsic factors. Hence, a classroom in which pupils are encouraged to become autonomous, authentic, and motivated language learners will have a positive influence on the pupils' personal achievements as well.

Looking back on this chapter, as well as on the previous chapters in which I provided an overview of advantages of different autonomy-enhancing strategies on the one hand, and scrutinised the possibilities to implement these while taking into account the curricular restrictions on the other hand, I cannot but conclude that organising an autonomy-enhancing classroom environment is feasible as well as preferable. Nevertheless, one can still reduce all of the above to a utopian, theoretical vision. Hence, in an attempt to enforce my argument, what I will discuss next concerns my case study on the effect of keeping a vocabulary notebook in the 3rd and 5th year of EFL.

4. Methodology: The effect of keeping a language diary

Vocabularies are crossing circles and loops. We are defined by
the lines we choose to cross or are confined by.

Antonia S. Byatt (2002: 467)

4.1. From theory to practice: the set-up of my study

As I mentioned in chapter 2, autonomy-enhancing methods exist in different forms and can differ greatly regarding the extent of required learner autonomy. Since any kind of empirical study within the scope of a master's thesis is characterised by temporal and material limitations, I decided to develop a straightforward tool in the context of vocabulary learning strategies: a language diary (often referred to as 'vocabulary notebook' in the relevant literature). Although in Schmitt's (1997) taxonomy 'keeping a vocabulary notebook is classified as a cognitive strategy within the larger division of consolidation strategies' (Walters and Bozkurt 2009: 404), the language diary I developed also contains at least one strategy for the discovery of a new word's meaning: the use of a monolingual dictionary. The '[s]trategies for consolidating a word once it has been encountered' (Schmitt 1997: 207) which are embedded in the language diary concern:

- image the word's meaning;

- connect the word to its synonyms and antonyms;

- group words together to study them;

- use the new word in a sentence;

- study the sound of the word.

Walters and Bozkurt (2009: 405) summarise the research on the benefits of using a vocabulary notebook in the following way:

- it enhances vocabulary study (Schmitt and Schmitt 1995);

- it improves learners' ability to use dictionaries and guess from context (Ledbury n.d.);

- it keeps teachers informed about learners' progress (Fowle 2002; Nation 19990);

- it enhances learner autonomy (Fowle 2002).

Hence, it already becomes clear that the implementation of this tool is widely applauded.

As I briefly touched upon in chapter 2, vocabulary notebooks can be regarded as generic materials in that they provide learners with certain procedures and strategies to learn vocabulary, and at the same time challenge learners to 'select the language content to which they will apply the generic procedures [and] to reflect on their learning and make decisions

about whether to continue using, to adapt or to change procedures' (Gardner and Miller 1999: 112). As Dickinson (1987: 9) points out, however, the implementation of autonomy-enhancing materials does not automatically lead to a greater amount of learner responsibility. Following her stream of thought, an approach by 'which the teacher seeks to include the learners increasingly in [the] decision-making process about their learning and the management of it' provides learners with a higher 'degree of responsibility for their own learning' (Dickinson 1987: 9). Her opposing view concerns the implementation of 'materials and resources for learning [that] are written and organised in such a way that the decision making and much of the management of the learning are built into the materials' (Dickinson 1987: 9). Instead of being fully responsible for their own learning, learners only have to decide on 'matters concerning when the work takes place, and perhaps which parts of the programme to work on at particular times' (Dickinson 1987: 9) in the latter case. These two views can be placed at opposite ends of a continuum as following:

Learner-centred ⟷	Self-instruction ⟷	Materials-centred
Greater learner responsibility		Much of the decision making and management of learning built into materials
Autonomy ⟷	Semi-autonomy ⟷	Programmed learning
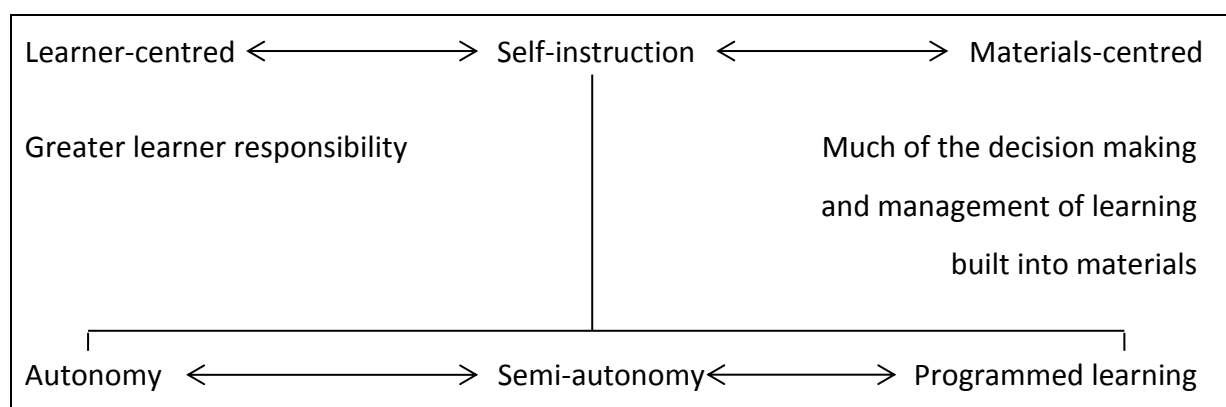
Figure 4.1: *The relationship between teacher's approach and learner responsibility (Dickinson 1987: 10).*

Starting from this continuum, I chose to make use of two different approaches to introduce the concept of the language diary in an EFL classroom setting. On the one hand, I designed a pre-patterned language diary for one group of learners, which can be found in appendix 2, that only requires a small amount of learner responsibility and hence fits in with the idea of programmed learning. On the other hand, I would provide blank booklets for two other groups of learners; an approach which requires a greater amount of learner responsibility and thus comes closer to the idea of semi-autonomy. In paragraph 4.4 I will dig deeper into the set-up of these materials.

Walters and Bozkurt (2009), whose study was a helpful starting point for my own, point out that, although the positive effects of vocabulary notebooks have been investigated through leaners' and teachers' attitudes, there is a great lack of empirical studies on the effectiveness of these notebooks. Hence, the purpose of my study is twofold: firstly, I will

focus on the effect this strategy has on the vocabulary acquisition of language learners in an EFL classroom setting. Secondly, I will have a look at the learners' and teacher's attitudes towards the implementation of a language diary. Concretely, this line of approach brings me to the following research questions:

- What is the short-term effect of keeping a language diary on pupils' vocabulary acquisition?
- What is the correlation between pupils' vocabulary acquisition and the degree of autonomy in keeping a diary – i.e. is either the use of a pre-patterned or the use of a blank diary more successful?
- What is the short-term effect of keeping a language diary on pupils' experience as autonomous language learners – i.e. on their sense of identity and motivation?
- What is the correlation between pupils' degree of satisfaction and the degree of autonomy in keeping the language diary?

4.2. The setting of my study and the participants in it

I conducted my study at Scheppersinstituut in Mechelen. This school provides for preschool education as well as primary and general secondary education, and is a subsidised free school. Hence, it is organised by the Flemish Secretariat of the Catholic Education (VSKO) and submitted to the curricula I discussed in chapter 2.2. As mentioned in the above, three groups participated in my study:

Class	Option	Hours of English	Female pupils	Male pupils	Age
4D	Latin B (Mathematics)	2	15	6	15-16
4F	Sciences B (Sport)	2	5	12	15-17
6C/E	Modern Languages - 6C: Sciences 6E: Mathematics	3	15	2	17-18

Table 4.1: *The participants in the current study.*

The treatment groups were chosen 'randomly' in that these three classes happen to be taught by the teacher who was willing to support my study. Of great importance, however, is the fact that two of these groups follow the same scheme of English. Hence, I was able to make a comparison between the 'programmed learning' (by means of the pre-patterned language diary) and the 'semi-autonomous' (by means of the blank booklets) approach in the fourth

grade on the one hand, and between the implementation of the 'semi-autonomous' approach in the fourth and sixth grade on the other.

4.3. Procedure: the implementation of the language diary

During the first week after the Christmas vacation all pupils were invited to take part in the project. During one of their English classes, I first provided them with information about the rationale of my study and then did a preliminary test (cf. appendices 3 and 4) to gauge the pupils' potential knowledge of the vocabulary they would be dealing with during the next weeks. After that, I directed a classroom conversation on how to participate for the duration of my study and made clear that the pupils would receive a complete notebook again at the end of the exercise as a present and incentive to participate. Since the pupils of 4F and 6C/E received a blank language diary, I provided them with the same instructions as I had written down in the pre-patterned diary (cf. appendix 2) and wrote the link to the website of *Collins Dictionary* down on the blackboard. Afterwards, I encouraged the pupils to come up with possible vocabulary learning strategies, which I briefly wrote down on the blackboard as well, and some examples. At the end of my explanation I emphasised that the main idea was for them to find the most suitable, personal strategies in order to become more confident in learning English, and that questions were always welcome. In 4D, the class in which the pupils received a pre-patterned language diary, I adopted a similar approach. Since all instructions were written down in their booklets, I encouraged the pupils to rephrase the instructions and provided them with opportunities to reflect on them.

The implementation of the language diary would last as long as it took the pupils to cover a new unit in their course books. Beforehand, the duration was set at five weeks (covering the period between the Christmas and Carnival Holidays), but this period was extended with two more weeks. After this period, the pupils were assessed again (cf. appendices 3 and 4) to measure the extent to which their vocabulary skills had increased compared to the previous test. During the last session, I invited the pupils to complete a survey (cf. appendices 5 and 6) in which they could share their experiences and assess the effect and efficacy of the language diary. To finish off, I provided them the opportunity to air their views orally and also had an evaluative conversation with their teacher.

4.4. Materials

During my investigation into the impact of the implementation of a language diary, I made use of three types of specially developed materials: a pre-patterned language diary, two vocabulary tests, and two surveys to measure the effectiveness of the autonomy-enhancing method. In the following paragraphs, I will explain how I developed these materials.

4.4.1. Language diary

As I mentioned above, the idea to design a language diary was fostered by Walters and Bozkurt's (2009) 'The Effect of Vocabulary Notebooks on Vocabulary Acquisition'. However, rather than having invited me to imitate the approach described, the article reminded me of an approach adopted by my lecturer when I was in teacher training. During our three-year training, she enforced us to keep a booklet in which we had to write down all words we encountered but were not familiar with, and to organise them in a significant manner while making use of different vocabulary learning strategies. Hence, these two sources of inspiration served as a model for the development of my own pre-patterned language diary for secondary school pupils.

Regarding the concrete vocabulary learning strategies, which I included in the pre-patterned language diary as well as introduced in the groups that received a blank notebook, I gained a lot of inspiration from of a document on autonomous learning developed by the Centre for Language and Speech of Antwerp University (2004). Hence, I chose the following nine vocabulary learning strategies to put into the language diary:

1. Theme: Place the word in a suitable thematic category. E.g.: 'haggis' and 'custard' belong to the general field of 'food'.

2. Stress & Plural form: Write down the new word, indicate its word stress, and put it in the plural. E.g.: product – products.

3. Definition: Provide a definition in English. E.g.: to repeat = to say again.

4. Sentence: Use the word in a meaningful sentence.

5. Synonyms: Look for words with comparable meanings. E.g.: large = fat = long.

6. Antonyms: Provide the opposite(s). E.g.: big >< small.

7. Related words: Look for related nouns, verbs, adjectives. E.g.: to repeat – a repetition – repetitive.

8. Miscellaneous: Write down what this word reminds you of. E.g.: expressions, words that rhyme with it, the place where you encountered it,… (Be creative!)

9. <u>Drawing:</u> Concrete words can be drawn. E.g.: a tree, its branches, its leaves,…

These instructions can also be found on the bookmark which goes together with the pre-patterned language diary (cf. appendix 3) and serves as a reminder for the pupils.

As far as the overall layout of the language diary is concerned, I chose to include some blank 'notes' pages which can serve either as scrap paper or as extra pages on which to write down additional notes, and as such can be added wherever wanted. In this context, it may become clear why I gave preference to the use of *Atoma* booklets. These notebooks allow pupils to take out and insert pages where necessary, and as such provide for the opportunity to keep on adding new words to already existing categories.

Containing a clear introduction, a ready-made framework to deal with words, and a bookmark to fall back on for extra information, the format of the pre-patterned language diary serves as a straightforward guideline for the pupils to try out and adopt different vocabulary learning strategies. As opposed to this clear-cut approach, two of my three treatment groups received a blank booklet. Hence, the latter parties had to put much effort and personal structure, as well as creativity and time, into organising their language diary.

4.4.2. Vocabulary tests

In order to investigate the efficacy of the use of a language diary, I created two vocabulary tests based on the texts which the pupils would be dealing with during the testing period. The first test (cf. appendix 4) relates to unit 4 of *New Contact 3* and consists of three types of exercises. A helpful source of inspiration to design these exercises was the list of task types provided by van Dyk and Weideman (2004). In 'Finding the Right Measure: From Blueprint to Specification to Item Type' they examine the task type 'multiple choice cloze'; a type of exercise I did not get acquainted with during my previous training to become a teacher. Taking into account the described conditions of this type of exercise, as well as the problems quoted by van Dyk and Weideman (2004), I chose to employ a similar approach to design the first exercise concerning 'A slightly different holiday'. This text moves away from van Dyk and Weideman's (2004) prescriptions on cloze-testing in that I did not invariably omit every seventh word on the one hand, and radically simplified the instructions that accompany this type of exercise on the other. As regards the second exercise, I chose to employ a modified cloze procedure, i.e. I chose to design an exercise in which 'the words to be deleted are selected individually [...] rather than on a fixed-ratio basis' (Read 1997: 309). Depending on the presence of straightforward indicators in the sentence, either the first letter

of the word that has been omitted is provided (as in a c-test), or no letter at all. While the first two exercises are highly restrictive in that only few answers may match the context provided, the third exercise makes an appeal to the pupils' creativity. Hence, in 'What does your favourite cottage look like?' they are free to choose which words to implement.

The second test (cf. appendix 5) relates to unit 3 of *Contact 5* and consists of four types of exercises. The first and second exercise rely on the same principles as the aforementioned modified cloze procedure and multiple choice cloze exercise. In the third exercise the pupils are expected to provide the word that matches the description, whereas in the fourth exercise only a drawing is placed at their disposal.

The underlying principle of these tests boils down to the idea that '[u]nder the influence of communicative approaches to language teaching and testing, current thinking tends towards the view that we should assess the learners' ability to deal with lexical items as they occur in whole texts and discourse tasks' (Read 1997: 303). Hence, I intended to develop exercises in which a clear context is present, and which fit in with the social environment of the pupils as well. To facilitate the possibility of measuring the pupils' improvements, these tests were used as both pre-tests and post-tests.

4.4.3. Surveys

To measure the short-term effect of keeping a vocabulary notebook on pupils' experience as autonomous language learners – i.e. their sense of identity and motivation – on the one hand, and to investigate the correlation between pupils' degree of satisfaction and the degree of autonomy in keeping the notebook on the other, I developed two different surveys (cf. appendices 5 and 6). In spite of the fact that one survey deals with questions concerning the pre-patterned language diary, and the other with questions regarding the blank version, both are constructed similarly. In order to form a complete image of the pupils' experiences, the surveys deal with questions concerning the efficiency of the language diary, the efficacy of the language diary, the effect of the language diary, and its sufficiency. The first three categories of questions are to be answered by means of a four-point Likert scale, whereas the last category contains some open questions.

As mentioned above, I also directed a final, evaluating classroom conversation in which the pupils could air their views. Hence, in the following chapter, I will not only discuss the test results and survey outcomes, but also the way in which the pupils made use of their language diary and the experiences they shared orally in class.

5. Study results: The effect of keeping a language diary

The important thing in science is not so much to obtain new facts
as to discover new ways of thinking about them.
Sir William Brag (qtd. in Van de Poel, Carstens and Linnegar 2012)

5.1. Vocabulary acquisition: a quantitative approach to the study

5.1.1. Test results

To assess the effect of the language diaries on pupils' vocabulary gain, the data were analysed in two stages. First, the scores of the pre- and post-tests of all three participating classes were compared individually by means of a two-tailed paired-samples *t*-test. This analysis of the differences between pre and post scores, i.e. pupils' gain, aims at providing an answer to the question whether there have been any substantial improvements in pupils' vocabulary knowledge at all. Second, since the pupils in 4D, who made use of a pre-patterned diary, and those in 4F, who made use of a blank diary, were evaluated by means of the same test (cf. appendix 4), another paired-samples *t*-test was conducted in order to find out whether the gains in 4D are substantially different from those in 4F – i.e. whether the use of one of the diaries was more successful. Pupils who were absent during either of the tests were excluded from the sample.

Table 5.1: *Class 4D (pre-patterned diary) – T-test results of pre- and post-test scores.*

Question type (max. score)	Pre-test *M* (SD)	Post-test *M* (SD)	Gain	t	df	p-value
Multiple choice cloze (8)	3.37 (1.34)	5.89 (1.56)	2.52	6.43	18	.000
Modified cloze exercise (10)	1.89 (1.24)	4.16 (1.46)	2.27	7.95	18	.000
Creative exercise (7)	3.37 (1.17)	6.11 (0.66)	2.74	9.99	18	.000

Table 5.2: *Class 4F (blank diary) – T-test results of pre- and post-test scores.*

Question type (max. score)	Pre-test *M* (SD)	Post-test *M* (SD)	Gain	t	df	p-value
Multiple choice cloze (8)	3.06 (1.73)	5.06 (1.29)	2.00	3.94	16	.001
Modified cloze exercise (10)	1.88 (1.54)	3.59 (2.27)	1.71	3.78	16	.002
Creative exercise (7)	3.00 (1.84)	5.88 (1.05)	2.88	6.15	16	.000

Table 5.3: *Comparison between gain of 4D and gain of 4F – T-test results.*
- *As Levene's test for the equality of means did not reach the level of statistical significance in any of the comparisons (p > .05), equal variances can be assumed and the degrees of freedom for the t-test do not need to be corrected.*

Post-test question type		t	df	p-value
Multiple choice cloze	Equal variances	1.70	35	.098
Modified cloze exercise	Equal variances	0.92	35	.365
Creative exercise	Equal variances	0.58	35	.565
Total	Equal variances	0.63	35	.533

As can be derived from the descriptive data (mean and gain scores), the pupils' vocabulary knowledge has increased in all three groups across all areas tested; the differences also reach the level of statistical significance ($p < 0.05$) in all cases. This finding was confirmed by a series of Wilcoxon Signed Rank tests; the non-parametric equivalent of the *t*-test. What is noticeable, though, is that the 4D pupils scored higher on the pre-test, which means that their level of vocabulary knowledge was higher to start with, as well as on the post-test compared to the 4F pupils. Next to that, their gains are higher on a descriptive level with respect to the multiple choice cloze task (2.52 in 4D vs. 2.00 in 4F) and the modified cloze exercise (2.74 in 4D vs. 1.71 in 4F). Yet, with regard to the creative task this outcome was reverted (2.00 in 4D vs. 2.88 in 4F). Nevertheless, considering that the gain of the 4D pupils is not statistically different from the gain of the 4F pupils, one cannot draw any conclusions with regard to the efficacy of the approaches, i.e. whether the use of either the pre-patterned or blank language diary was more successful.

A striking aspect, however, is that in both 4D and 4F the post-test mean scores on the modified cloze exercise are lower than half of the maximum score ($M = 4.16$ and $M = 3.59$ out of 10 respectively). Since 'cloze is a potentially productive task type because it may test vocabulary, grammar and cohesion, an understanding of text type, and possibly also communicative function' (van Dyk and Weideman 2004: 20), these disappointing results may be an indication of either the exercise being too difficult, or either the pupils not having contextualised the vocabulary enough while making use of the language diary. As opposed to the modified cloze exercise, the creative exercise was successfully completed by a majority of pupils in the post-test (4D: $M = 6.11$ out of 7, SD = 0.66 and 4F: $M = 5.88$ out of 7, SD = 1.05).

Table 5.4: *Class 6C/E (blank diary) – T-test results of pre- and post-test scores.*

Question type (max. score)	Pre-test M (SD)	Post-test M (SD)	Gain	t	df	p-value
Modified cloze exercise (11)	1.62 (1.71)	6.31 (1.38)	4.69	7.78	12	.000
Multiple choice cloze (9)	2.92 (1.94)	5.62 (2.14)	2.70	3.69	12	.003
Provide a word that matches the description (5)	0.15 (0.38)	1.77 (0.73)	1.62	6.69	12	.000
Name what is in the picture (5)	0.15 (0.56)	2.00 (1.00)	1.85	5.19	12	.000

By comparing the pre- and post-test scores of the pupils of 6C/E, a striking evolution can be noticed as regards the modified cloze exercise ($M = 1.62$ and $M = 6.31$ out of 11 respectively). Although one may suppose that this is a consequence of these pupils having contextualised the new vocabulary by means of their diary, this assumption is

counterbalanced by the results obtained on the 'provide the word that matches the description' exercise ($M = 0.15$ and $M = 1.77$ out of 5 respectively). The low scores of the latter once again suggest that either this exercise was too difficult, or that the pupils lacked a clear frame of reference while studying these words. A similar observation concerns the disappointing pre- and post-test scores on the 'name what is in the picture' exercise ($M = 0.15$ and $M = 2.00$ out of 5 respectively) – a type of exercise which in general is regarded as being very straightforward. Hence, in spite of the overall positive development which these pupils underwent, the data indicate that two out of four tasks do not meet the basic requirements of tests.

It has become clear that one cannot be certain that the pupils' vocabulary gain, though statistically significant, resulted from the intervention – i.e. their use of the language diary. Given the fact that this was a pilot study with a limited sample size and no control group on the one hand, and that external factors may have influenced the pupils' learning activities on the other, the results which are displayed in figure 5.1, 5.2, and 5.4 should be interpreted cautiously. Consequently, to find out whether the use of the language diary has been of influence on the participants' results, I will now discuss the extent to which they made use of the tool, as well as how they evaluated its usability. Afterwards, this information will allow me to establish some connections between the pupils' efforts, experiences, and achievements.

5.1.2. The use of the language diaries: some facts

Even though the post-test scores discussed in the previous paragraph do not point out a difference between the efficacy of the pre-patterned diary and that of the blank diary, having a look at the extent to which the pupils of all three classes made use of the booklet may provide an insight into its influence on the pupils' vocabulary learning routines. Before analysing my observations regarding the applied vocabulary learning strategies by means of a comparison between all three classes (cf. table 5.5 and 5.6), I will first provide an overview of the efforts of each class individually.

5.1.2.1. *4D's use of the pre-patterned language diary*

In 4D (N = 21) 10% of the pupils did not hand in their language diary at the end of the piloting period. Moreover, 24% (N = 5) of the diaries I received had not been used. Of the fourteen diaries that had been completed 86% (N = 12) contained one to twelve words only, while in the other 14% (N = 2) over twenty words were dealt with. A striking fact about the

strategies applied in the diaries is that half of the pupils included, often among others, a translation of the new vocabulary. The pupils' favourite strategy apparently consists of providing a definition, since this method was applied by 79% (N = 11) of them. Several pupils also included example sentences and/or synonyms, and occasional drawings, but they hardly listed antonyms or related words. As regards the use of themes 71% (N = 10) tried to categorise the new vocabulary, of which 30% (N = 3) made use of abstract grammatical labels like 'verbs', 'nouns', and 'adjectives' rather than concrete signifiers.

5.1.2.2. *4F's use of the blank language diary*

In 4F 88% (N = 15) of the pupils made use of the booklet. Among them, 27% (N = 4) drew up a list of less than nine words without any further additions, while another 20% (N = 3) of them made similar lists accompanied by translations. The 13% (N = 2) of pupils who dealt with more than twenty words made a convenient outline of difficult vocabulary, its definitions, drawings, related words, and synonyms, but included a translation of the words listed as well. Hence, only 40% (N = 6) of the pupils who made use of their diary chose to apply different strategies – providing a definition again being the most popular one – without adding translations. A striking fact about the 4F pupils is that nobody chose to insert themes. Hence, none of the diaries contains a structured overview of categories of words dealt with.

5.1.2.3. *6C/E's use of the blank language diary*

In 6C/E (N = 17) almost all (N = 16) or 94% of the pupils handed in their booklets at the end of the testing period, having drawn up lists going from six to more than hundred words. The 88% (N = 14) of pupils who dealt with less than 37 words gave preference to the use of definitions, although 14% of them (N = 2) only added a translation to the unknown words. Occasionally, some of the pupils added drawings and/or example sentences, but in general not many different strategies were applied. Since the 12% (N = 2) of pupils that dealt with more than hundred words and definitions did not categorise them, one can derive that their final list is rather poorly organised.

5.1.2.4.   Conclusion: the pupils' use of the language diaries

Table 5.5: *The use of the language diaries in 4D, 4F, and 6C/E.*

	4D N = 21	4F N = 17	6C/E N = 17
The number of pupils who did not hand in/use their diary.	33,33%	11,76%	**5,88%**

	4D N = 14	4F N = 15	6C/E N = 16
The number of pupils who dealt with more than twenty words.	14,29%	13,33%	**25,00%**

Table 5.6: *The pupils' applied vocabulary learning strategies.*

Vocabulary learning strategies: The language diaries contained:	4D N = 14	4F N = 15	6C/E N = 16
- no applied vocabulary learning strategies at all.	7,14%	26,67%	0,00%
- only additional translations to the new words.	7,14%	20,00%	**12,50%**
- translations as well as other vocabulary learning strategies.	42,86%	13,33%	**0,00%**
- a definition of the new words.	**78,57%**	**46,67%**	**87,50%**
- minimum three different vocabulary learning strategies (translations not included).	64,29%	33,33%	18,75%
- a straightforward division into themes.	**71,43%**	0,00%	6,25%

Summarising the findings discussed above (cf. table 5.5 and 5.6) I can now draw some (tentative) conclusions. As regards the differences in use of the language diary between the fourth graders and the sixth graders, the most striking observation is that the latter group inserted significantly less translations. Instead, the sixth graders preferred to stick to the strategy of providing a definition of the unknown word. Although they consequently still remained on a probably well-known and 'safe' ground, this approach may account for the pupils' gain in the cloze procedure exercise (cf. table 5.4). A very positive finding is that all of these pupils applied at least one vocabulary learning strategy to every unknown word written down in their diary. Next to that, the fact that the number of actively involved participants was the highest in 6C/E, and that one fourth of them dealt with more than twenty words in the diary, as opposed to less than one fifth of fourth graders, is a rather pleasant surprise. Hence, despite being in their last year of secondary school, which may involve an increased amount of stress and/or school fatigue, these pupils seemed more willing to actively make use of the diary than their younger colleagues. A question that still remains, though, is whether the sixth graders would have tried out more different strategies if they had received a pre-patterned language diary.

As regards the differences between the 4D and 4F pupils, a striking conclusion is that the number of pupils who were willing to actively participate in the project is lower in the group which received a pre-patterned language diary. Moreover, although the pre-patterned language diary did not contain a 'translation'-strategy, the 4D pupils added significantly more translations to the unknown words compared to their colleagues in 4F – which may be a consequence of the former group having Latin as main subject, since this course involves a lot of translating and learning vocabulary by heart. Even though these findings do not support the implementation of the pre-patterned language diary at all, a broader comparison between the pupils who received this version and those who received a blank diary proves that the pre-patterned diary encouraged a majority of pupils to thematise the new words, whereas, in general, both the 4D and 6C/E pupils only managed to obtain poorly organised vocabulary lists. Hence, in spite of having followed the curriculum for modern languages for four years now (and having wound up seven years of French, four years of English, and two years of German already), the sixth graders do not seem to have been taught how to organise vocabulary into semantic fields. Next to the above, the vocabulary learning strategies provided for in the pre-patterned diary seem to have stimulated the 4D pupils; a majority of these pupils applied more than three different strategies, as opposed to less than a third of the pupils who had received a blank diary. Consequently, the guidance provided for by means of the pre-patterned language diary definitely did bring along some advantages concerning the acquisition of vocabulary learning strategies.

In general, it is remarkable to notice that 'providing a definition' is by far the pupils' favourite vocabulary learning strategy. However, a striking difference can be noted between the 4F pupils, of whom less than half applied this strategy, and the 6C/E pupils, of whom more than four fifths adopted this strategy. Given the fact that both these classes received a blank diary, and that of the pupils in 4F more than a fourth did not apply any strategies at all, I tentatively conclude that the fourth graders needed more guidance than the blank diary provided them with. With a view on mapping these conclusions onto the pupils' own experiences, I will continue by analysing their own evaluation of the diary which they shared by means of a survey.

5.1.3. Survey results

5.1.3.1. *Efficiency of the language diary*

Table 5.7: *The participants' evaluation of the efficiency of the language diary.*
- *The grey areas indicate the questions that were not a part of the pupils' survey on the efficiency of either the pre-patterned or blank language diary.*

Efficiency of the laguage diary	Strongly disagree			Disagree			Agree			Strongly agree		
	4D	4F	6C/E	4D	4F	6C/E	4D	4F	6C/E	4D	4F	6C/E
The language diary looked appealing.	0,00%	5,88%	0,00%	66,70%	52,94%	62,50%	33,30%	41,18%	37,50%	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%
The instructions were fairly straightforward and clear.	0,00%	5,88%	0,00%	14,30%	0,00%	0,00%	66,70%	82,35%	81,25%	19,00%	11,76%	18,75%
I feel the teacher introduced us to sufficient possibilities to deal with new vocabulary.		5,88%	0,00%		17,65%	12,50%		64,71%	75,00%		11,76%	12,50%
I feel the language diary restricted my freedom.	4,80%			33,30%			57,10%			4,80%		
I feel the language diary allowed me too much freedom.		29,41%	0,00%		52,94%	43,75%		17,65%	50,00%		0,00%	6,25%
I feel the language diary provided sufficient possiblities to deal with new vocabulary.	9,50%			47,60%			42,90%			0,00%		
I would have preferred a pre-patterned language diary.		5,88%	0,00%		0,00%	6,25%		47,06%	43,75%		47,06%	50,00%
I would have to structure my language diary according to my own needs.	4,80%			33,30%			57,10%			4,80%		
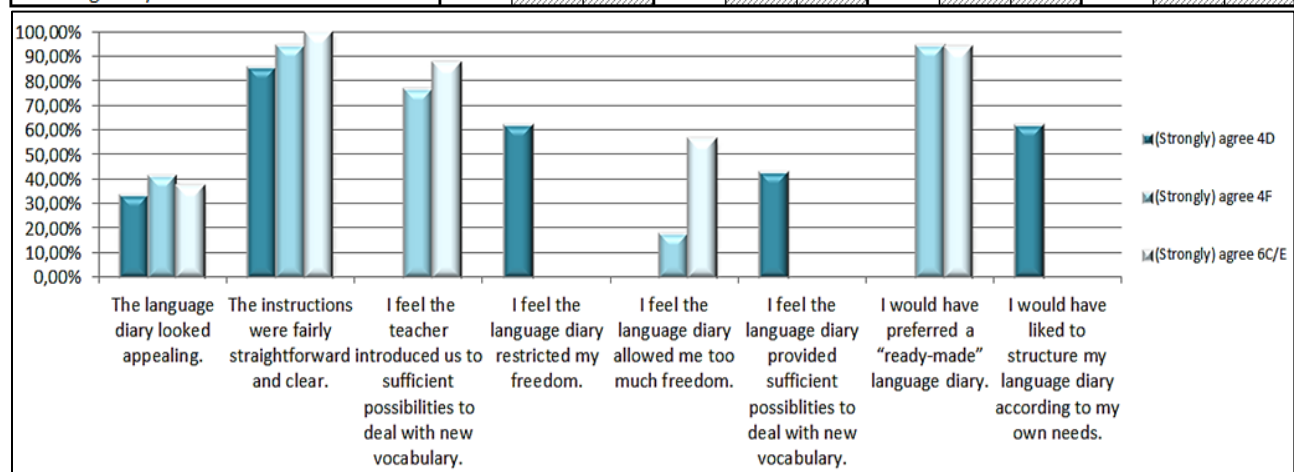
As regards the efficiency of the language diary some remarkable observations can be made. For one, according to a majority of pupils, the language diary is not appealing to work with. Surprisingly enough, the design of the blank *Atoma* booklets is moreover better received than that of the pre-patterned language diary. Even though most pupils agree on having received straightforward instructions, the opinions concerning the optimal degree of autonomy in keeping the diary (i.e. whether the latter should be a pre-patterned or blank version) differ widely. A striking fact is that, of the pupils who worked with a pre-patterned language diary, more than half (57%) claims that it did not provide sufficient possibilities to deal with new vocabulary on the one hand, and almost two thirds (62%) think that it restricted their freedom on the other. Consequently, almost two thirds (62%) of these pupils would have

liked to work with a blank language diary; a finding that contrasts sharply with the 94% of pupils who would have preferred the pre-patterned diary, which I showed them during the final classroom debriefing, instead of their own blank version. With regard to the latter group of pupils, a more or less general agreement on the sufficiency of the amount of possibilities to deal with new vocabulary provided can be derived (three quarters or 76% in the fourth grade, more than four fifths or 88% in the sixth), whereas the opinions concerning the freedom of the blank booklets represent a striking difference. While one would expect to find the opposite result, less than one fifth (18%) of fourth graders states that the blank diary allowed them too much freedom, against more than half (56%) of sixth graders.

5.1.3.2. *Efficacy of the language diary*

As far as the efficacy of the language diary is concerned, it is remarkable to notice that the sixth graders evaluate the use of the language diary significantly more positively compared to their colleagues in the fourth grade. Nevertheless, though three quarters (75%) of sixth graders claim to have gained insight into how to study English, against a quarter or 24% of fourth graders, only over one third of them (38%) feels that they have acquired more knowledge by means of the language diary, against one third or 34% of fourth graders. More than half (56%) of the sixth graders believes that using a language diary may improve their language skills – a conviction that is shared by only a quarter (24%) of the fourth graders. The fact that a third or 34% of fourth graders nevertheless experienced working with the diary in a positive way, and that 31% of them claim that it stimulated them to reflect on their English language skills, hence comes a bit as a surprise – but may be promising for their vocabulary learning future too.

A widely agreed upon statement that is definitely worth closer study concerns 'I found completing the language diary unnecessarily complex', on the basis of which two conclusions can be drawn. For one, it is clear that the sixth graders, compared to the fourth graders, encountered less difficulties regarding the way in which they were to make use of the language diary. In addition, a sharp contrast can be noticed between the pupils who received a blank diary and those who received a pre-patterned version. While in the latter group 'only' half of the pupils thinks that completing the language diary was unnecessarily complex, more than three quarters (76%) of those who had to structure a blank booklet agree with this statement. What seems to be rather paradoxical, then, is the fact that almost two thirds (65%) of these pupils nevertheless claim that the booklet helped them to identify their own strengths

– as opposed to only over one third (38%) of the pupils who worked with a pre-patterned language diary. A similar finding that cannot be accounted for concerns that a third of the pupils with a pre-patterned language diary believes that it encouraged them to discover language on their own, whereas only 6% of the pupils with a blank language diary agree with this.

Table 5.8: *The participants' evaluation of the efficacy of the language diary.*

| Efficacy of the laguage diary	Strongly disagree			Disagree			Agree			Strongly agree		
	4D	4F	6C/E	4D	4F	6C/E	4D	4F	6C/E	4D	4F	6C/E
I feel the language diary has provided me insights in how I should study English.	4,80%	23,53%	6,25%	71,40%	52,94%	18,75%	19,00%	23,53%	**68,75%**	4,80%	0,00%	6,25%
I do not believe keeping a language diary will improve my language skills.	0,00%	11,76%	6,25%	19,00%	17,65%	**50,00%**	66,70%	70,59%	12,50%	14,30%	0,00%	31,25%
I experienced working with the language diary in a positive way.	4,80%	23,53%	12,50%	57,10%	47,06%	37,50%	38,10%	29,41%	**50,00%**	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%
The language diary stimulated me to reflect on my English language skills.	14,30%	0,00%	6,25%	52,40%	70,59%	37,50%	28,60%	29,41%	**56,25%**	4,80%	0,00%	0,00%
I feel more competent after using the language diary.	0,00%	11,76%	12,50%	**90,50%**	**70,59%**	**62,50%**	9,50%	17,65%	25,00%	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%
Completing the language diary has helped me to identify my own strengths.	0,00%	0,00%	6,25%	**61,90%**	**58,82%**	**50,00%**	38,10%	35,29%	43,75%	0,00%	29,41%	0,00%
I found completing the language diary unnecessarily complex.	0,00%	0,00%	6,25%	47,60%	0,00%	68,75%	38,10%	**70,59%**	25,00%	14,30%	5,88%	0,00%
I liked using the language diary because it encouraged me to discover language on my own, rather than waiting for explanations from the teacher.	4,80%	29,41%	0,00%	**61,90%**	**58,82%**	**56,25%**	28,60%	5,88%	43,75%	4,80%	0,00%	0,00%
I feel I have acquired more knowledge than I would have done without the language diary.	0,00%	11,76%	12,50%	**66,70%**	**58,82%**	**50,00%**	33,30%	29,41%	37,50%	0,00%	5,88%	0,00%
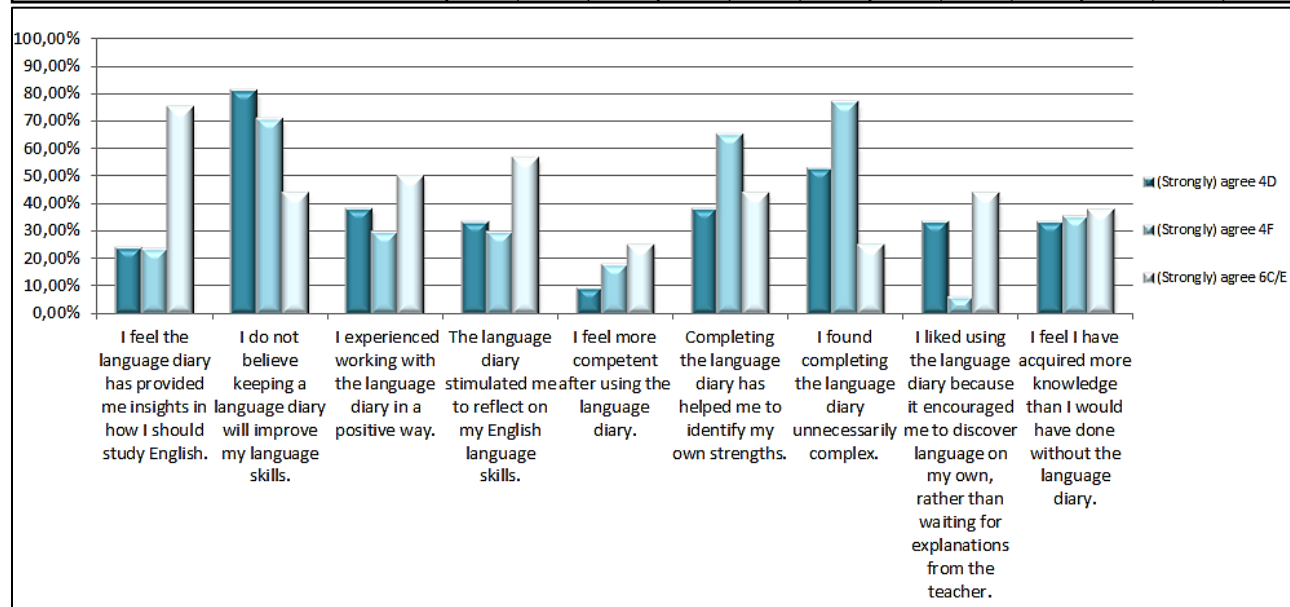
5.1.3.3.   The effect of the language diary

Table 5.9: *The participants' evaluation of the effect of the language diary.*
-   *The grey areas indicate the question that was not a part of the pupils' survey on the effect of the pre-patterned diary.*

The effect of the language diary	Strongly disagree			Disagree			Agree			Strongly agree		
	4D	4F	6C/E	4D	4F	6C/E	4D	4F	6C/E	4D	4F	6C/E
Completing my language diary gave me a sense of achievement.	9,50%	17,65%	6,25%	76,20%	64,71%	56,25%	14,30%	11,76%	37,50%	0,00%	5,88%	0,00%
I would like to keep using a language diary.	23,80%	47,06%	12,50%	71,40%	35,29%	75,00%	4,80%	17,65%	12,50%	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%
I feel I did not take enough notes during the introductory session, and consequently did not know how to tackle this assignment properly.		5,88%	25,00%		52,94%	50,00%		41,18%	25,00%		0,00%	0,00%
I feel I was not motivated enough to bring the language diary up to date as frequently as I should have.	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%	9,50%	17,65%	18,75%	71,40%	41,18%	50,00%	19,00%	41,18%	31,25%
Completing the language diary has stimulated my personal interest in learning English.	0,00%	11,76%	6,25%	85,70%	70,59%	81,25%	14,30%	17,65%	12,50%	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%
I feel I have become more self-directed in my learning by using the language diary.	4,80%	11,76%	6,25%	81,00%	70,59%	50,00%	14,30%	17,65%	43,75%	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%
Dealing with English vocabulary on a regular basis encouraged me to use more complicated vocabulary in class.	0,00%	11,76%	18,75%	76,20%	76,47%	50,00%	23,80%	11,76%	31,25%	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%
I consider using a language diary during other language classes as well.	19,00%	41,18%	12,50%	66,70%	41,18%	62,50%	14,30%	17,65%	25,00%	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%
Using the language diary made me feel more confident about my learning abilities.	0,00%	0,00%	6,25%	81,00%	64,71%	75,00%	19,00%	35,29%	18,75%	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%
I felt more motivated to read texts and deal with new vocabulary on a regular basis.	0,00%	17,65%	6,25%	76,20%	70,59%	56,25%	19,00%	11,76%	37,50%	4,80%	0,00%	0,00%
I feel more confident after using the language diary.	0,00%	5,88%	12,50%	85,70%	82,35%	75,00%	14,30%	11,76%	12,50%	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%
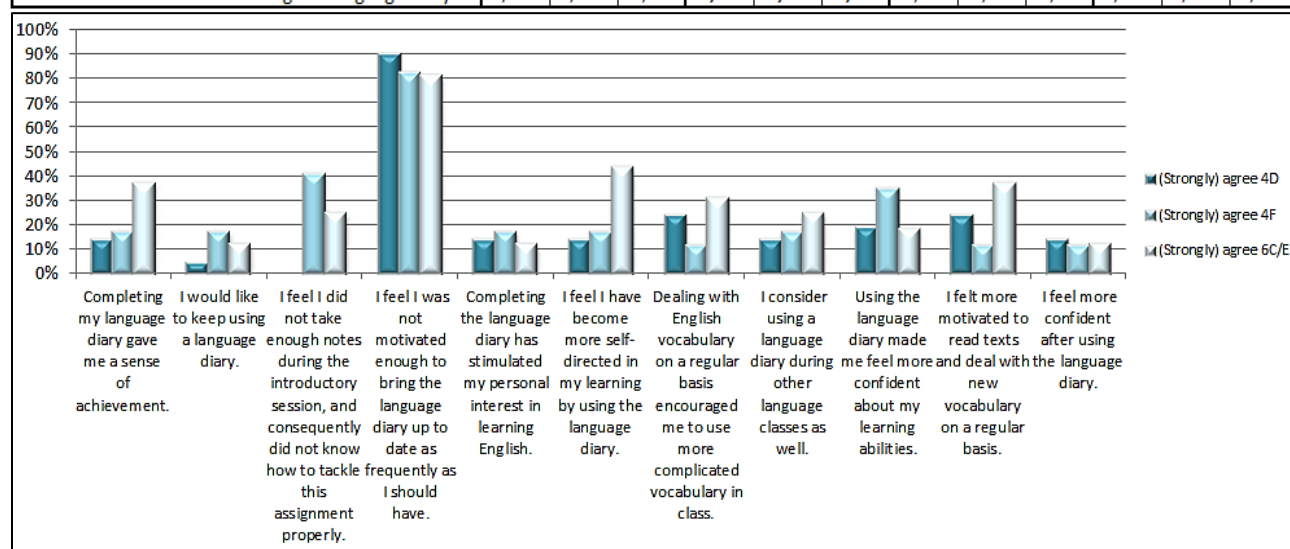
With regard to the effect of the language diary, three notions that immediately attracted my attention concern those of motivation, personal interest, and confidence. No less than four fifths (85%) of all pupils participating agree on not having been motivated enough to complete the diary, which resulted in the same number (87%) of them not feeling more confident after having used the language diary either. Both these aspects can be easily linked to the fact that only one sixth (15%) of all pupils agrees that the language diary has stimulated their personal interest in learning English. Nevertheless, when comparing the fourth graders to

the sixth graders, a striking difference concerning the concepts of achievement and self-directedness can be derived. While of the sixth graders over one third (38%) claims to have experienced a sense of achievement while completing the diary, and almost half of them (44%) states to have become more self-directed, only a sixth (16%) of the fourth graders feels the same way.

5.1.3.4.   Sufficiency

In this section, I will provide an overview of the most salient answers to the open questions in the survey (cf. table 5.10). By comparing and analysing the different classes' recurrent answers, I will come up with some tentative conclusions regarding the differences between the experiences of the fourth and sixth graders on the one hand, and between those of the pupils who received a pre-patterned diary and a blank one on the other hand. In paragraph 5.1.3.5, I will eventually establish a link between these findings and the preceding components of the survey.

As can be derived from table 5.10, a large number of pupils stated that completing the diary takes too much time. What is interesting to notice in this context is that of the pupils who received a pre-patterned diary less than one third (29%) mentioned this, while almost half (45,22%) of the pupils who received a blank diary held this opinion. Taking into account that over one third (36,58%) of the latter group would have preferred the pre-patterned diary which I showed them during the finalising classroom conversation, possibly due to a lack of structure in the blank diary, I tentatively conclude that the concept of a materials-centred approach is regarded by the pupils as being less time- and effort-consuming. A strikingly positive aspect of both the blank and the pre-patterned language diary is that they helped the pupils to understand and learn new vocabulary more easily. However, again a difference can be noted between the pupils who received a pre-patterned diary (of whom 38% stated this) and those who received a blank one (of whom 51% stated this). Consequently, a second reasonable assumption as regards the difference between the two types of diary is that the learner-centred version (the blank one), probably by demanding more creativity and active involvement, is more successful when it comes to the acquirement of new vocabulary. As almost half of the pupils (43%) claimed that the pre-patterned diary contains too many sections, the happy medium between the two approaches may be the most encouraging, and maybe even the most successful strategy – an assumption worth investigating in a future research study on the implementation of vocabulary notebooks.

Table 5.10: *The participants' evaluation of the sufficiency of the language diary.*
- *The links indicate statements that are very similar and hence are considered as a whole.*
- *The grey areas indicate the questions that were not a part of the pupils' survey on the sufficiency of either the pre-patterned or blank language diary.*

How did you *experience* working with the language diary?	4D	4F	6C/E
Completing the diary takes too much time; we already had too many other things to do.	23,81%	**35,29%**	**37,50%**
It helped me to learn how to study on my own and to remember and understand English vocabulary more easily.	**38,09%**	17,65%	12,50%
What according to you are the *weak points* of the language diary?			
It takes too much time and effort.	28,57%	**52,94%**	31,25%
It is easy to forget about its existence.	14,29%	17,65%	18,75%
The blank diary lacks a proper layout and a clear structure.	▨	5,88%	**31,25%**
The fact that we were not allowed to ask for extra information about certain words in class was annoying.	/	5,88%	**25,00%**
What according to you are the *strong points* of the language diary?			
It helped me to learn and understand new English words more easily.	23,81%	**52,94%**	**50,00%**
The strategies to learn vocabulary provided were very useful and helped me to describe words in English rather than merely translating them.	23,81%	/	31,25%
The diary allowed me to keep my own progress and to reflect upon my own difficulties.	9,52%	**29,41%**	6,25%
What would you like to *change*/improve?			
Nothing.	33,33%	35,29%	25,00%
In the pre-patterned diary, I would prefer more blank pages and less to be filled in.	**42,86%**	▨	▨
I would have preferred a pre-patterned language diary instead of a blank one.	▨	29,41%	**43,75%**
Would you *recommend* the language diary to others?			
Yes.	19,00%	17,65%	**50,00%**

As regards the general evaluation of the language diary, the sixth graders are significantly more convinced of the diary's efficacy than their colleagues in the fourth grade; half of the pupils in 6C/E would recommend the use of this strategy to others, as opposed to only 18% of fourth graders. However, the fact that a fourth of the former group claims that it was annoying that they were not allowed to ask for extra information about certain words in class, as well as the observation that 17% of all pupils state that it was easy to forget about the diary's existence, raises some doubts about the procedure followed by their teacher – something I will get back to in paragraph 5.2.2.

5.1.3.5.   Conclusion: the pupils' evaluation of the language diaries

Despite the (at first sight) paradoxical answers I encountered in the first three parts of the pupils' evaluation, a comparison between these parts and the answers to the open questions leads to some interesting conclusions. For one, it has become clear how visually

spoilt pupils nowadays are, as only a small amount of participants thought the diary to be appealing. Linking this observation to the fact that a majority of pupils with a blank diary would have preferred a pre-patterned one and vice versa, as well as to the disadvantages of both approaches (the latter being too densely designed, the former allowing them too much freedom but however being more helpful to identify their own strengths), an interesting question for future research concerns whether it is possible to find an encouraging happy medium between the materials-centred approach and the learner-centred one, which would optimise the learners' well-being as well as their learning outcomes.

As regards the differences between the evaluations of the fourth graders and those of the sixth graders, an interesting finding is that in general the latter group is strikingly more positive about the diary's usability, as well as about its autonomy-enhancing aspects. Not only did they encounter less difficulties regarding the way in which they were to make use of the diary – which may be attributed to them being more mature than the fourth graders – more than half of them is convinced of the fact that using a language diary may improve their language skills as well. Although this conviction was not demonstrated in the effort they put into completing the diary (cf. paragraph 5.1.2), I regard their realisation as a great first step in the process of awareness raising concerning the advantages of autonomous learning. The remaining question, then, is whether these sixth graders came to this insight because of their abilities to look back on, and to make a comparison with, four years of English without making use of this approach (as opposed to the fourth graders, who only have been learning English for two years now), or rather because they have already reached the age at which they start thinking about standing on their own two feet and as such are aware of the necessity of becoming more autonomous.

Nevertheless, my findings also prove that the sixth graders, as well as their colleagues in the fourth grade, still have a long way to go. The fact that four fifths of all pupils acknowledge not having been motivated enough to make use of the diary as much as they should have demonstrates that something significantly went wrong in the A.I.M.-circle. As this insight is of major significance in the context of my current study, what I will discuss in section 5.2 concerns some qualitative flaws of my study on the one hand, and some suggestions for improvement with an eye on future studies on the other. Before digging into the qualitative evaluation of my study, however, I will first look into some individual pupils' test results and their use of the language diary to see whether a link can be established between the two.

5.1.4. The link between the pupils' test results and their use of the language diary

Although I already drew some preliminary conclusions concerning the pupils' results in section 5.1.1, an important question remains: 'Did pupils who put much effort into the use of the language diary obtain better test/learning results compared to those who did not?' In order to answer this question I studied the pupils' individual results first. Afterwards, I picked out some outstanding pupils (marked in bold) and established some links between the results they obtained and the effort they put into the use of their diary.

Table 5.11: *The participants' individual test scores.*

4D	PRE-TEST	POST-TEST	4F	PRE-TEST	POST-TEST	6C/E	PRE-TEST	POST-TEST
4D 1	48,00%	60,00%	**4F 1**	**64,00%**	**68,00%**	**6C/E 1**	**50,00%**	**47,00%**
4D 2	44,00%	56,00%	4F 2	56,00%	60,00%	6C/E 2	27,00%	48,00%
4D 3	52,00%	72,00%	4F 3	40,00%	46,00%	6C/E 3	33,00%	63,00%
4D 4	48,00%	72,00%	4F 4	52,00%	60,00%	6C/E 4	20,00%	53,00%
4D 5	**48,00%**	**72,00%**	**4F 5**	**52,00%**	**72,00%**	6C/E 5	20,00%	60,00%
4D 6	36,00%	60,00%	4F 6	40,00%	60,00%	6C/E 6	17,00%	60,00%
4D 7	40,00%	76,00%	4F 7	24,00%	36,00%	6C/E 7	10,00%	37,00%
4D 8	28,00%	54,00%	4F 8	36,00%	64,00%	6C/E 8	13,00%	58,00%
4D 9	36,00%	72,00%	4F 9	32,00%	60,00%	6C/E 9	10,00%	50,00%
4D 10	36,00%	72,00%	4F 10	28,00%	56,00%	6C/E 10	10,00%	50,00%
4D 11	32,00%	68,00%	4F 11	32,00%	76,00%	**6C/E 11**	**13,00%**	**67,00%**
4D 12	24,00%	52,00%	4F 12	24,00%	70,00%	6C/E 12	10,00%	57,00%
4D 13	28,00%	64,00%	4F 13	12,00%	36,00%	6C/E 13	7,00%	47,00%
4D 14	28,00%	64,00%	4F 14	16,00%	56,00%	6C/E 14	3,00%	37,00%
4D 15	24,00%	60,00%	**4F 15**	**16,00%**	**62,00%**	**6C/E 15**	**1,00%**	**67,00%**
4D 16	**32,00%**	**80,00%**	**4F 16**	**16,00%**	**64,00%**	6C/E 16	7,00%	A
4D 17	**24,00%**	**60,00%**	4F 17	8,00%	48,00%	6C/E 17	A	63,00%
4D 18	12,00%	40,00%						
4D 19	**16,00%**	**72,00%**						
4D 20	28,00%	A						
4D 21	A	56,00%						

5.1.4.1. 4D (pre-patterned language diary)

In this class, pupil 17 more than doubled her score of the pre-test and obtained the highest mark of the class on the post-test. Since her diary merely consists of six words and their definitions, and I moreover recall her to be the one saying that it was annoying to look up words in a monolingual dictionary and to not understand the definition either, her results however cannot be ascribed to a successful use of the diary. As regards pupil 19, who made a lot of progress and obtained a high mark as well, one can even state that the diary was

completely redundant – for she did not write anything down in it at all. Nevertheless, the results and comments of two twin members of this class who intensively used their diary, pupil 5 and pupil 17, may shed a more positive light on the efficacy of the language diary. Even though pupil 5 obtained a higher score than his sister (pupil 17), the latter clearly made a lot more progress and seems to have received the benefits of her labour as well.

From the comments pupil 5 was willing to send me after my study had taken place, I could derive that he and his sister share one very important characteristic as far as my study was concerned: both are eager to acquaint themselves thoroughly with the English language. As such, completing the language diary boosted pupil 5's interests rather than felt like an obligatory task (he could not speak for his sister, though). Since both of them went looking for words in English series and songs, he is not to certain about the diary's usefulness in the context of the unit they had to study. But, although he felt that he could have executed the second question better, he did not really feel disappointed about his marks. About my question regarding him and his sister having a healthy dose of competitive spirit among one another, he was rather disclaiming. Nevertheless, he did admit that he always felt an urge to perform better than his sister and that they had asked each other several times how many words the other had written down in his/her diary so far. Although I do not believe the results of these pupils to be sufficient to claim the efficacy of the language diary, I think it is justified to state that the comments of pupil 5 have proven the importance of motivation and learner identity again. After all, he and his sister have demonstrated how their intrinsic motivation, as well as their mutual incentives, have led to a well-structured language diary and good test results.

5.1.4.2.   4F and 6C/E (blank language diary)

In these classes, the correlation between the pupils' results and their efforts in completing the diary is very similar to what I have just stated; it remains very hard to draw a straightforward conclusion. For one, pupil 1 and pupil 5 obtained the highest marks in 4F, although neither of them wrote anything down in his language diary. In the same class, pupil 15 and pupil 16 provide for a counterexample. Both made great use of the diary, obtained clearly structured wordlists with definitions, drawings, synonyms, etc., and received high marks as well. Although the latter two made more progress than pupils 1 and 5, the facts are too paradoxical to draw a conclusion as regards the efficacy of the diaries.

The same tendency occurs in 6C/E, where both pupil 11 and pupil 15 obtained high marks, whereas the difference between their efforts put in the diary could not be bigger. While pupil 11 only wrote down some English words and their translations in her booklet, pupil 15 submitted the most extensive diary of all pupils who participated in my study – she even added an great amount of pages filled with the 'longest words contest' she had held with her brother. Sharply contrasting her approach, pupil 1 only wrote down a couple of words in his language diary and scored worse on his post-test than he had done on his pre-test. Hence, a tentative conclusion that may be drawn is that the initial motivation on the pupils' part plays a major role in the way in which they complete their diary on the one hand, and that this combination of motivation and a considered use of the language diary probably leads to higher marks on the other hand.

5.1.4.3.   *Conclusion: The link between the pupils' test results and their use of the language diary*

Comparing the pupils' test results to their use of the language diary does not lead to a straightforward conclusion regarding the diary's efficacy at all. Since I do not know the pupils well enough – I do not know what their average results for English look like, nor the vocabulary learning strategies they may have been employing in addition to the use of the diary – the positive outcomes of the study do not necessarily correlate with the efforts put in the diary. Nevertheless, though I am aware of the fact that this finding is based on a rather limited amount of data, I believe the importance of motivation has once again come to the fore. As both the twins in 4D and pupil 15 in 6C/E have demonstrated, a positive view on language learning may lead to better results. Moreover, judging from the fact that pupil 5 of 4D stated that the diary boosted his interests, as well as from the observation that pupil 15 of 6C/E used her booklet to play a language game with her brother, I still believe the language diary to be a suitable tool to enhance pupils' motivation and autonomy – be it only if they are already intrinsically motived to learn the language. Taking into account that four fifths of all pupils acknowledged not having been motivated enough to make use of the language diary in the first place, I will now try to discover what may have given rise to this kink in the A.I.M.-circle.

5.2. An evaluation of the process: a qualitative approach to the study

5.2.1. The pupils' and teacher's attitudes to vocabulary learning

Although I already elaborated on the study's methodology in section 4.3, having a look again at some of the pupils' convictions and practices that came to the fore during the classroom conversations may lead to a better understanding of why only so few pupils got influenced by the possibilities the language diary provided them with. To begin with, during the introductory session on how to participate, a recurrent question concerned why the pupils were not allowed to translate words into Dutch or other languages. Consequently, I explained that not all words have an equivalent in Dutch on the one hand, and that a lack of context-knowledge often encourages confusion on the other (as for example with the word 'economical' which has nothing to do with the most common meaning of the Dutch term 'economisch' as a derivative of 'economie'). Also, I emphasised the importance of being able to explain something which you cannot remember the correct term for, for chances that a foreigner will understand a Dutch translation are very rare. Nevertheless, it already became clear that the majority of pupils was not able to express themselves in the target language – or at least did not feel confident enough to communicate in English. Next to that, what struck me in the classes in which the pupils had received a blank notebook was that some pupils did not write down any of the instructions or examples I provided while explaining the aim of the language diary. Though I encouraged them to do so, the lack of curiosity most pupils were characterised by was possibly an omen for what would follow.

During the six weeks in which the pupils were working with the language diaries, I tried to keep in contact with the teacher who was in charge from then on. She soon gave me to understand that many pupils were struggling with some questions concerning the use of their language diaries, and impressed me that she was drawing up a list of certain shortcomings – something I could only welcome with a view on the in-process control.

Since the post-tests were postponed until after the Carnival Holidays, and the pupils' timetable overlapped mine almost completely, I could not wind up the study myself. Hence, I chose to conduct the survey before the holidays and as such was able to have a (quasi) final classroom debriefing in each of the participating classes. What struck me most was that many pupils, while completing the open questions in the survey, appealed to *Google Translate* every time they did not know how to put their thoughts into words – though I had encouraged them to ask questions if they were struggling with something. This observation already made me realise that the language diaries would only have had little effect on the pupils' attitudes

towards dealing with the English language on the one hand (and communication in a foreign language in general), and their learning strategies on the other. During the finalising conversation it moreover became clear that not much effort had been put into working with the language diaries, and some striking comments on the pupils' part made me realise that a great miscommunication must have had occurred between the teacher and me. A majority of pupils in all three classes stated that:

- they were not reminded enough of the fact that they had to work with it and hence simply forgot about its existence;
- it was very annoying that they were not allowed to ask the teacher for some explanations about certain difficult words, and as such could only look for these words' meanings when they were back home.

Even though the role of the teacher as regards the first remark is disputable – as the study's aim was to appeal to the pupils' own sense of autonomous language learning – the second comment is clearly an indication of the teacher having a different, more narrow and restricted, view on autonomous learning than I had in mind.

After having received the post-tests and the language diaries, of which the outcomes were – despite my last attempt to encourage the pupils – slightly disappointing, I was very eager to receive the teacher's remarks about the study, to find out what went wrong. Unfortunately, it turned out that she had not been writing anything down during the previous weeks – though she had even asked me whether she was allowed to do so, and whether it would be of help for me. Since she preferred emailing rather than meeting me, I waited patiently for her comments to arrive in my mailbox. After several reminders on my part, she provided me with the following list of 'dry remarks' that had 'popped into her head at the moment of writing' (translation mine):

- Is the concept of 'autonomous learning' fit for pupils of secondary education? Doesn't the task of teachers consist of guiding secondary school pupils? I think the language diaries would gain more support in, for example, the context of evening classes. People who take these classes do so of their own free will and are often very motivated. Hence, they want to make progression rapidly, learn many new words, etcetera. I think for this kind of people the approach would be of great benefit.
- Concerning the routine of the language diaries, I thought it almost impossible not to explain some new vocabulary in class. Sometimes you just have to know the meaning of a word before you can move on. It is impracticable to spend an entire lesson on a

concept or text if the pupils do not understand some keywords. Therefore, I think your choice of test subjects was not the right one.

- A six to seven weeks' time span is rather short to make oneself familiar with a whole new way of acquiring vocabulary. I think the pupils had not realised that they were going to receive a different kind of test, until the date was set (although I had repeatedly warned them!). By then, it was of course too late to lock the stable doors.

- The fact that the pupils were not allowed to translate words has been bothering me throughout the whole study. I agree that not all words have an exact equivalent in the native language, but many words – and certainly those who were to be studied by my pupils – do have one. Why would you, being a pupil in puberty, bother looking up synonyms, definitions and antonyms, and drawing pictures, if you can simply come up with a translation? If you are able to translate a word, it means that you have acquired it as well. This nevertheless does not mean that I am an advocate of the 'traditional' glossary NL-EN. I do regard the context in which words are being used important, and the use of derivatives etcetera. However, I do not believe that the best way of acquiring vocabulary is without translating it.

Next to these general remarks, she also mentioned that the pupils had been disappointed about their test results, and had come to realise why a proper use of the language diary would have been of great help. However, and disappointedly, she did not take this up with either researcher or class groups.

5.2.2. Insights, questions, and objections

Taking into consideration the pupils' and teacher's comments at the end of the study, one can distinguish three main categories of shortcomings:

- Practical problems, among which the relative short time span of the study and the overabundance of other tasks and things to do.

- General methodological problems concerning the implementation of the language diary in classroom activities.

- Specific methodological problems as regards the way in which new vocabulary was dealt with in the language diary.

Additionally, I will discuss these shortcomings with a view on the role of the teacher in our current educational system.

5.2.2.1. Practical problems

As far as the practical problems are concerned, I do not think it important to deal with them in great length. I am very well aware of the fact that the study was restricted in time, but am still convinced that the duration of seven weeks could have been long enough for the pupils to become fairly acquainted with the use of a language diary. Next to that, I am willing to believe that the pupils had a lot of other things to do as well, but nevertheless am convinced that keeping a language diary does not ask a lot of effort if worked with on a regular basis. The methodological problems, on the contrary, definitely need some further consideration.

5.2.2.2. General methodological problems

As mentioned above, a great miscommunication seems to have occurred between the teacher and me regarding the implementation of the language diaries in classroom activities. As can be derived from her remarks, she thought she was not allowed to explain new words to the pupils in class – which at once made me realise why the pupils were so annoyed by the fact that they often had to wait until they were home to find out the meaning of a certain word. Rather than tackling it this way, I would have provided the pupils with a short explanation, and would have encouraged them to write the word down in their language diary to look up more information about it later. Without pointing the finger at the teacher, for my explanations to her may have been vague just as much as her understanding may have been wrong, I believe this approach would have been more fruitful as it also would have served as a reminder to make use of the language diary on a regular basis. In my opinion, this finding aligns perfectly with the teacher's remark about teachers having to guide pupils in a secondary school context. Though (one of the) aim(s) of the study was to foster the pupils' autonomy, I deliberately chose to make use of a generic material and made two different versions according to the extremes on the responsibility-continuum (cf. chapter 4). As such, my intended purpose was to find a way in which the intrinsic motivation of the pupils was appealed to, as well as which left enough room for the teacher to stimulate them.

Regarding the notions of motivation and regulation, it has become clear that (most of) the pupils who participated in the study have not reached the stage of internal regulation yet (cf. chapter 3). Rather than being self-determined language learners, i.e. 'volitional beings who are growth-oriented, that is, predisposed to life-long learning and development' (Ortega 2009: 175), they still seem to depend on externally regulated factors such as tests. This finding aligns with the teacher's statement that the pupils themselves were disappointed with

the test results they received, and only then came to realise what had been the purpose of the language diary. Nevertheless, some proper self-criticism may be in place here as well, since the organisation of my study does not entirely comply with the motivation-enhancing regulations. As can be derived from Legehausen's (2012: 24) procedural principles of autonomous language learning, an 'element of choice […] is certain to enhance the motivation of learners'. Hence, the fact that I, a stranger to the pupils, suddenly 'invaded' their classroom and more or less obliged them to make use of the language diary – having moreover chosen myself whether they would receive a pre-patterned or a blank one – clearly restricted their freedom of choice and as such may have influenced their motivation rather negatively. Since promoting learner autonomy entails to encourage pupils 'to determine the objectives, to define the contents and progressions, to select methods and techniques to be used, to monitor the procedures of acquisition and to evaluate what has been acquired' (Holec 1981, qtd. in Balçıkanlı), involving the pupils in for example the setting of the deadline and the choice of diary may have been a first step in the good (or, at least, better) direction. Also, I came to realise that I may have been focusing too hard on the vocabulary learning strategies, rather than promoting the autonomy-enhancing aspects of my study. After all, as Legenhausen (2012: 31) interestingly notices with regard to the LAALE project, '[i]t is remarkable that the learners do not focus on the linguistic aspects of what they have achieved. [Their] statements illustrate convincingly that the successes of the autonomous classroom go far beyond the linguistic achievements'. Due to my own enthusiasm to promote new learning strategies by means of the language diaries, I myself appear to have forgotten the larger aim of my study at a certain point. Hence, I cannot but admit that I did not put out all the stops to motivate the pupils to become more autonomous as well as I could have done.

Next to this lack of motivation on the pupils' part, which only led to a minor form of autonomy which could not reinforce that motivation, on the one hand, and an assumed shortage of teacher's guidance on the other, the use of *Contact* may have gone against the pupils' ability to explore and unfold their learner identities as well. Since this textbook provides clearly aligned topics and vocabulary lists, holding on to it in a strict manner does not leave much room for the pupils, nor for the teacher, to connect learning contents with their own transportable identities. Consequently, these three aspects can be seen as disturbing the A.I.M.-circle.

5.2.2.3.   *Specific methodological problems*

With regard to the specific vocabulary-learning strategies the pupils were provided with, a 'prohibition' concerning the implementation of translations immediately caused a great stir among the pupils. Moreover, from the first time I had met her onwards, the teacher had been expressing her dissatisfaction with the fact that I did not applaud the use of translations at all. An important remark in this context is that, in general, learning and testing FL in Flanders is still done through translation. Hence, this strategy has most probably become an inherent learning strategy of both teacher and pupils. Of course I have to agree that learning a language without ever translating something is undoable, but I am also well aware of the restrictions this strategy brings about. For one, allowing the pupils to translate words would have probably made them blind to the other, less known, strategies. Next, and moreover, did I not only create the language diary to enhance the pupils' autonomy, as I was eager to impart the value of being able to develop their own strategies in learning a foreign language as well. After all, as Balçıkanlı (2010: 96) points out, these strategies 'will lead them to be more aware of what kind of progress they have made and what else they need to improve next'. These notions of learner strategies and autonomy are moreover closely linked to each other, since '[w]ithout developing such strategies, students will remain trapped in their old patterns of beliefs and behaviors and never be fully autonomous' (Wenden 1998, qtd. in Balçıkanlı 2010: 96). While correcting the tests it nevertheless became clear that most pupils had still studied the vocabulary list by heart by means of translating it. To select one example of the flaw in this method: one fourth-grader wrote some translations down in pencil and translated 'living' in the first exercise (cf. appendix 4) as 'woonkamer', and 'live-in' as 'inwoner'; translations that are not even correct and do not match the context of the sentence at all. As mentioned above, it was only after the test had taken place that the pupils realised the purpose of the language diary. In this context I hence cannot but wonder whether the teacher has ever affirmed the statements concerning translations I preached during the introductory lessons. Since the teacher's convictions – and as such her authenticity – have been of great influence during the course of my study, and she herself is merely a product of her own education, having a look at the teacher's roles that are promoted by our current educational system may lead to some interesting conclusions.

5.2.2.4. *The role of the teacher in our current educational system*

Following van Lier's (1996: 128) finding that 'a teacher's authenticity may stimulate authenticity in the students as well' on the one hand, and Little's (1995: 175) statement that 'the development of autonomy in learners presupposes the development of autonomy in teachers' on the other, it may be clear by now that the teacher's attitude towards autonomy is of vital importance in the autonomy-enhancing process. Unfortunately, in our current educational system some prevailing conceptions (and prejudices) about 'autonomy' still seem to prevent teachers from siding with, among others, the critical pedagogues. Judging from the misunderstandings that took place between the teacher and me, as well as from her differing opinions concerning for example the importance of translating new vocabulary, I am convinced that this insight forms a fundamental 'flaw' of my study; that our respective trainings have imparted a different view on the concept of autonomy to us.

As mentioned above, a first fallacy concerns the teacher's conviction that she was not allowed to explain any new words in class anymore. This observation is clearly in accordance with Little's (1995: 178) observation that '[i]t is sometimes thought that learner autonomy necessarily entails total independence – of the teacher, of other learners and of formally approved curricula'. Hence, following the idea that '[i]n formal educational contexts learners do not automatically accept responsibility for their learning – teachers must help them to do so; and they will not necessarily find it easy to reflect critically on the learning process – teachers must first provide them with appropriate tools and with opportunities to practise using them' (Little 1995: 176-177), the teacher's lack of involvement probably caused the pupils to feel a bit lost – which may elucidate the fact that more than half of the participating pupils did not experience working with the diary in a positive way (cf. 5.2.2). Since this study was my idea, and 'however closely [the teacher] may [have sought] to follow a prescribed programme, she [could] only communicate her necessarily unique interpretation of it' (Little 1995: 178), I cannot but wonder whether the study would have proceeded more smoothly if I had informed the teacher better about my views on the concept of autonomy.

Next to the misconceptions of the teacher, I myself clearly overlooked some tricky aspects of implementing an autonomy-enhancing method in an unfamiliar classroom environment. In this context, Legenhausen's (2012) writings on 'Principles and Successes in Autonomous Language Learning' has provided me some interesting insights regarding how difficult it can be for pupils, who are already set in their learning habits, to suddenly adopt a new way of tackling their learning process. Legenhausen (2012: 22) points out that:

> The teaching orthodoxy of most communicative approaches holds that learners should not outperform their competence, but should operate within the structural system which they have been taught and hopefully internalised up that point. They are not allowed to go beyond that system and explore unchartered territories, as it were, on their own. […] [A]nother postulate of mainstream teaching holds that errors should be corrected – preferably immediately after they have occurred. […] In order for learners to take over responsibility for their own learning, we need to get them emotionally and cognitively involved in the undertaking.

Consequently, it may have been the case that the pupils got overwhelmed by a feeling of being caught in the middle. After all, even though the aspect of autonomy should have felt like a 'release' for them, the ideology behind it radically contravened the structural system which they were used to. Moreover, since it was not possible for them to fall back on the experience of the teacher, the fact that they did not write down as many words in their diaries as I had been expecting beforehand may in all likelihood be due to them not feeling confident about their own capacities and hence being afraid of making mistakes. As such, merely adding a translation to the unknown words may not only have been the 'easiest' solution, but also the safest one. Since 'the decisive factor will always be the nature of the pedagogical dialogue' (Little 1995: 175) my expectation that the autonomy-enhancing method, i.e. the language diary, by itself would be enough to enhance the pupils' autonomy and knowledge of vocabulary learning strategies was clearly a too rosy view of the matter.

Taking these findings and insights into consideration, I cannot but emphasise once again how important the role of the (autonomous) teacher is in the autonomy-enhancing process – a teacher who 'knows not only what to do, but why. [For a]utonomous teachers do not just accept uncritically what curriculum specialists give them. They think about whether they agree with what is suggested. They take responsibility for the education they are offering children' (Balçıkanlı 2010: 91). Hence, autonomous teachers, together with their pupils, have to work towards an environment in which learners are allowed to cultivate their intrinsic motivation, as well as to re-adjust it by integrating extrinsic factors like a language diary. If teachers (T) live up to these expectations, they will positively influence the A.I.M.-circle and keep their pupils from becoming [teim] (cf. figure 5.1). Accordingly, Little (2012: 180) points out that '[l]anguage learners are more likely to operate as independent flexible users of their target language if their classroom experience has already pushed them in this direction; by the same token, language teachers are more likely to succeed in promoting learner autonomy if

their own education has encouraged them to be autonomous'. As such, the quest for an educational environment in which 'autonomy' is the central concern can only be successful if everyone – all umbrella organisations and teacher-training departments, all teachers and educators – is on the same page.
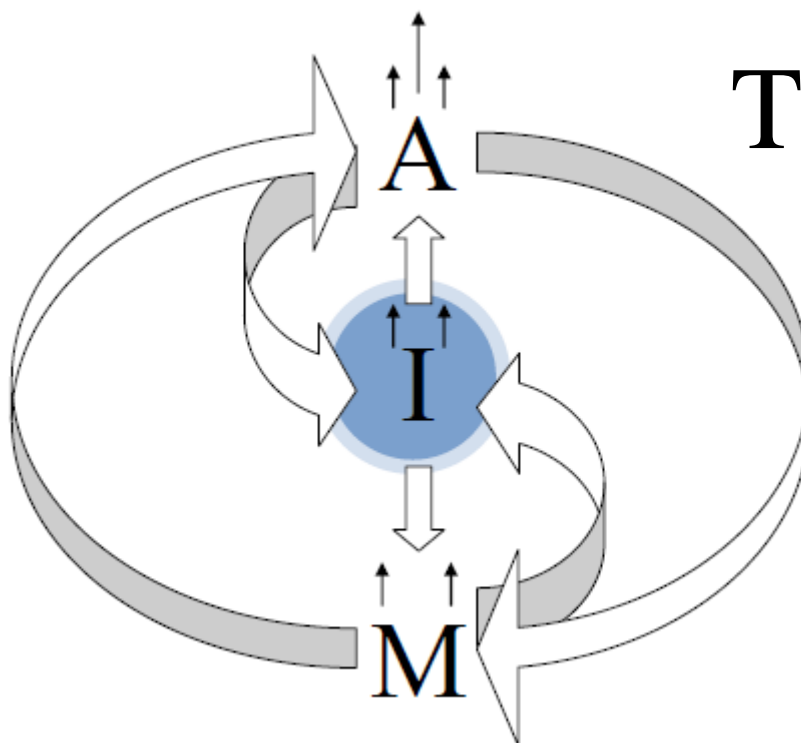
Figure 5.1: *The T.A.I.M.-model: the importance of an authentic, autonomous, and motivating teacher to prevent learners from becoming [teim] (Seberechts 2013).*

5.3. Conclusion: Study results

Given the present study's limitations, the correlation between the effect of the language diaries and the pupils' vocabulary gain should be interpreted very cautiously. However, as regards the use of the pre-patterned and blank diary, some general (dis)advantages were brought to the fore. In accordance with Gardner and Miller's (1999: 112) finding that '[g]eneric materials demand more of learners than other kinds of materials [in that they] need to find content, they need to learn how to apply a procedure, they need to find their own ways of checking their performance and they need to reflect on what they have done and learned in order to make decisions about further uses of the materials', the blank diary clearly allowed the fourth graders too much freedom. The pre-patterned diary, on the

other hand, was generally received as being too densely designed and containing too many different strategies. A remaining question hence concerns whether a happy medium between the two would have had a greater effect on the pupils. Since the sixth graders encountered less difficulties as regards the use of the blank diary, possibly due to their maturity, it has been confirmed that a steady transition from guided self-instructional activities to the implementation of generic materials is recommended.

Following Walters and Bozkurt's idea that 'vocabulary notebooks are a useful addition to the language classroom, particularly for motivated students', and that a majority of pupils acknowledged not having been motivated to make use of the diary, a qualitative evaluation of the study was definitely in place. By linking the pupils' experiences to the teacher's convictions, it has become clear that the latter's identity, which is always (inadvertently) passed on to pupils, has been of even greater importance than the set-up of the materials. Consequently, at the end of my current writings, the most important lesson to learn from the study on the effect of keeping a vocabulary notebook is that a motivated, autonomous teacher is an absolute necessity in the process of 'creating' motivated learners who are willing to make use of the autonomy-enhancing materials they are provided with.

6. Conclusion: The 'Successful' Autonomous Language Learner

In the course of this thesis, I have been arguing for a wider understanding of the meaning of learner autonomy and its interrelation with motivation and learner identity. Gradually, the theoretical discussion in chapter 1 and 3 provided an answer to the following questions:

- In what way can a greater sense of autonomy lead to a stronger sense of identity for a language learner?
- In what way does the blooming of learner identity lead to a motivating environment in which pupils are able to develop into autonomous language learners?

As illustrated by means of the A.I.M.-model, the elements of autonomy, identity, and motivation in these questions can be interchanged with one another; an increase of either of them always having a positive effect on the other. Starting from the idea that an autonomy-enhancing environment is an important impetus to create 'fully rounded' persons who are able to 'express their own identities through the language they are learning – that is, to be and to become themselves, so that, as Little (2004: 106) puts it, "what they learn becomes a part of what they are"' (Ushioda 2011: 13-14), I pointed out the importance of an encouraging, authentic teacher who provides pupils with the possibility to connect learning contents with their own transportable identities. Accordingly, 'externally controlled actions can only be beneficial if they gradually fall in step with intrinsically motivated actions' (Van Lier 1996: 113); a motivational environment hence fostering the further development of one's learner identity and autonomy.

As regards the feasibility of implementing autonomy-enhancing methods in the EFL classroom, I demonstrated that the curricula for English allow sufficient freedom to make use of (some of) the examples provided for in chapter 2 of this thesis. In accordance with the different levels of required autonomy in the methods which I presented, the curricula of the first, second, and third level of English display an evolution regarding the attention that is paid to autonomy-fostering methods. Hence, it is the task of the teacher to select worksheets or other materials that suit the pupils' level best.

Illustrating some of the theoretical and practical issues raised in the former chapters, my study measuring the effect of keeping a language diary in the 3rd and 5th year of EFL was based on the following research questions:

- What is the short-term effect of keeping a language diary on pupils' vocabulary acquisition?

- What is the correlation between pupils' vocabulary acquisition and the degree of autonomy in keeping a diary – i.e. is either the use of a pre-patterned or the use of a blank diary more successful?

- What is the short-term effect of keeping a language diary on pupils' experience as autonomous language learners – i.e. on their sense of identity and motivation?

- What is the correlation between pupils' degree of satisfaction and the degree of autonomy in keeping the language diary?

Given the present study's limited sample size, the lack of a control group, and the fact that external factors may have influenced the pupils' learning activities, the two first questions were answered very cautiously. In spite of the statistically significant improvements measured in all three classes, no general conclusions can be drawn with regard to the diary's effect on the pupils' vocabulary acquisition. Nevertheless, some general (dis)advantages of both the pre-patterned and blank diary were brought to the fore. On the one hand, the pre-patterned diary was too densely designed, but encouraged a majority of pupils to thematise new words and try out different vocabulary learning strategies. On the other hand, the blank diary allowed the pupils too much freedom, but at the same time was more helpful to identify their own strengths. Hence, I tentatively conclude that a happy medium between this materials-centred and learner-centred approach may optimise the learners' welfare as well as their learning outcomes – a conclusion which is definitely worth further consideration in future research.

An interesting addition to the above concerns the fact that a majority of sixth graders believes that they could improve their language skills by means of a language diary, but nonetheless did not feel motivated enough to make use of it – the latter being a statement shared by a majority of fourth graders. Consequently, as regards the diary's short-term effect on the pupils' sense of identity and motivation, the most important lesson which is to be learned from this study concerns that the language diary is only a suitable tool to enhance pupils' motivation and autonomy if they are already motivated to learn the language to begin with. Consequently, once again the role of authentic teachers is being emphasised; they, together with their pupils, have to work towards an environment in which learners are allowed to cultivate their intrinsic motivation, as well as to re-adjust it by the integration of extrinsic factors like the language diary. As can be derived from the A.I.M.-circle as well, it is only in

this way that teachers may be able to let their pupils face the fact that '[t]he only man who is educated is the man who has learned how to learn; the man who has learned how to adapt and change; the man who has realized that no knowledge is secure, that only the process of *seeking* knowledge gives a base for security' (Rogers 1969, qtd. in Dickinson 1987: 34).

Having confirmed the importance of adjusting autonomy-enhancing materials to the level of self-directedness of the learners confronted with on the one hand, and the immense impact which an encouraging, authentic teacher may have on the other hand, the present study still leaves many questions unanswered as regards the efficacy of vocabulary notebooks. Consequently, future studies may want to focus more on the long-term effect of this autonomy-enhancing method: familiarise learners with it from the first year of English on and increase the level of self-directedness year after year. By doing so, more insight may also be gained into intervening variables like gender, age, environmental factors, … Nevertheless, I do believe that this thesis was a successful first attempt to explore the possibilities which the Flemish curriculum for English provides us with. I hence cannot but finish off by emphasising the importance of motivating, autonomous teachers in our current educational system once again – for 'learners have the power and right to learn for themselves' (Smith 2008, qtd. in Balçıkanlı 2010: 91). And by now, I do hope to have made clear that motivation to implement one of the introduced methods is only one small step for a teacher, but one giant leap in the development of successful autonomous language learners.

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Appendix 1: An illustration of materials for corner work

- At the start of this corner work concerning food and drinks, the pupils are provided with the following 'contract':

What's on the menu today?

I have to...		Work...	Correction	Finished?	Result*	Appreciation
1. Time to train your memory: pick one of the possibilities.	5'	😀😀	⚷		+ / -	☺ ☹
2. May I take your orders? (LC)	12'	😀😀	⚷		+ / -	☺ ☹
3. Teatime or coffee break? (RC)	8'	😀	⚷		+ / -	☺ ☹
4. Let's become a food maker!	15'	😀	🔑		+ / -	☺ ☹

I am allowed to...		Work...	Correction	Finished?	Result*	Appreciation
5. Now eat it!	10'	😀	⚷		+ / -	☺ ☹
1. Time to train your memory: pick the possibility that you haven't chosen yet.	5'	😀😀	⚷		+ / -	☺ ☹

* After having finished an exercise, be sure to have a look at the questions on the 'route card' to see whether you have to consider your answers as sufficient (+) or substandard (-). Also read the aim of each exercise; this might come in handy while preparing for the test.

- The corners in which the pupils will do these exercises concern:
    - a memory corner: this corner contains two copies of two memory games (cf. exercise 1);
    - a PC corner: both 'May I take your orders?' and 'Now eat it!' should be executed here (cf. exercise 2 and 5);
    - a reading corner: this corner contains some textbooks to do exercise 3 with;
    - a creativity corner in which to execute exercise 4.
  There are also dictionaries at hand in every corner.

- The symbols used represent the following:

	Target time of execution.		There is a key at hand to correct the exercise.
	Work individually.		The teacher will correct this exercise.
	Pair work.		

- The pupils are free to do the exercises in the order they want to, but after each exercise are obliged to complete their contract as well as the route card. These documents allow them to reflect on their achievements. The route card concerning 'What's on the menu today?', as well as the reading exercise, can be found on the following pages.

- To foster the learners' well-being in these autonomously executed exercises, enough time should be provided for them to do at least one of the 'I am allowed to'-exercises as well.

Route Card

1. Memory

→ If you made more than two mistakes, indicate ' – '.

→ Write down the words that you couldn't match with the right picture or consider to be very hard to remember.

Difficult word(s):

…………………………..
…………………………..
…………………………..
…………………………..
…………………………..
…………………………..
…………………………..
…………………………..
…………………………..

While preparing for the test of unit 5, be sure to study all vocabulary concerning food.

2. May I take your orders?

→ If there are two or more questions which you could not answer, indicate ' – '.

OR

→ If your neighbour thinks he was the one that answered all questions orally, instead of answering them together with you, indicate ' – ' as well.

→ If you had problems doing the exercise, listen to the conversation once again and try to find out what you did wrong/ misunderstood. Write down your conclusion.

………
………

Based on this conversation, you should be able to (take an) order in a restaurant.

3. Teatime or coffee break?

→ If you made more than two mistakes (in the second part of the exercise!), indicate ' – '.

→ If you had problems doing the exercise, read the text once again and try to find out what you did wrong/ misunderstood. Write down your conclusion.

………
………

This text contains some important vocabulary concerning food and drinks, which you should study to prepare for the test. Also make sure that you are able to read and understand similar texts (by deriving the meaning of difficult words from the context).

4. Let's become a food maker!

→ The teacher will tell you whether to indicate ' + ' or ' – '.

→ If you made any spelling errors, correct them:

………
………

You should be able to use vocabulary concerning food in a creative manner and in a suitable context.

5. Now eat it!

→ If you had more than 3 (spelling) errors, indicate ' – '.

→ If you made any spelling errors, correct them:

………
………

You should be able to understand the main idea of a heard (song)text (by deriving the meaning of difficult words from the context).

Exercise corner 3 - Reading Comprehension

3. Teatime or coffee break?

a. <u>Pre-reading</u>: Read these statements and tick off whether they are true or false in your opinion.

STATEMENTS	Pre-reading session		Reading session	
	TRUE	FALSE	TRUE	FALSE
1. Tea drinking was invented by the British in the Elizabethan era (2nd half of the 16th century).				
2. The tea plant is grown in Britain.				
3. Drinking tea is good for your health.				
4. Afternoon tea in Britain is at 5 p.m.				
5. It is advisable to drink tea during examination periods.				
6. You should pour milk first and then add tea, and not the other way around.				
7. Coffee comes from Africa.				
8. Coffee had been known in the Muslim world for many centuries before it came to the West.				
9. Drinking coffee is bad for your health.				
10. The word 'coffee' actually means 'wine'.				

b. <u>Reading:</u> Now read the text about tea and coffee in your PB p. 104-105 to check your guesses. Tick off the correct alternatives in the right-hand column.

3. Teatime or coffee break?

a. <u>Pre-reading</u>: Read these statements and tick off whether they are true or false in your opinion.

STATEMENTS	Pre-reading session		Reading session	
	TRUE	FALSE	TRUE	FALSE
1. Tea drinking was invented by the British in the Elizabethan era (2nd half of the 16th century).				X
2. The tea plant is grown in Britain.				X
3. Drinking tea is good for your health.			X	
4. Afternoon tea in Britain is at 5 p.m.				X
5. It is advisable to drink tea during examination periods.			X	
6. You should pour milk first and then add tea, and not the other way around.			X	
7. Coffee comes from Africa.			X	
8. Coffee had been known in the Muslim world for many centuries before it came to the West.			X	
9. Drinking coffee is bad for your health.				X
10. The word 'coffee' actually means 'wine'.			X	

b. <u>Reading:</u> Now read the text about tea and coffee in your PB p. 104-105 to check your guesses. Tick off the correct alternatives in the right-hand column.

Appendix 2: Pre-patterned diary

This language diary belongs to

_____

Class: _____

Snapshots

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Audacity, noun. Unrestrained impudence.

Impudence...
Impudence...

Impudent, adjective. Marked by impertinent disrespect.

Impertinent...
Impertinent...

Universiteit
Antwerpen

"Vocabularies are crossing circles and loops. We are defined by
the lines we choose to cross or to be confined by."

- A.S. Byatt -

Congratulations!

From this moment on you may call yourself the proud owner of a language diary! If you allow this little booklet to become your best friend during the following weeks, it will help you to deal with some difficult (sometimes puzzling, sometimes demanding) English vocabulary in return. Of course, you will have to get yourself motivated to make use of this tool. But, once you have managed this challenging first step, you will find out that this way of learning vocabulary can improve your learning output.

On the next page you will find an outline of the steps to complete your language diary. You should keep in mind that this booklet is strictly personal and only has to fulfil your own needs. Whereas some strategies may sound very familiar to you, others might be completely new. In a first instance, it may prove useful to deal with new vocabulary in the prescribed way. However, if you notice that some strategies do not work well for you and/or you can come up with better ideas to deal with new words, feel free to do so! Remember that there does not exist one 'magical' strategy to learn vocabulary, but that you should search for and adopt the strategies that suit you best…

Good luck!

Karen Seberechts
November 2012

Your language diary step-by-step
- Write your name on the first page of your notebook and on the bookmark which you can find in the middle of your booklet.
- Every time you deal with a new text in class (or watch an English series or film at home), look and listen for words you are not familiar with and write them down on the 'Notes' pages which can be found at the end of your language diary.
- Look these words up in a monolingual dictionary and try to categorise them under (a) general theme(s). (A good online dictionary is, e.g., http://www.collinsdictionary.com/).
- Fill in the framework by following the steps that are explained on your bookmark.
- Complete the table of contents by listing your chosen themes.

Some general remarks
- Always bring your language diary to class.
- Check on a regular basis (i.e. at least three evenings a week) whether you have included all unfamiliar words of the texts discussed in class (and/or difficult words you encountered while you were watching television, surfing the internet,…).

VI

Table of contents

1. Theme № ...... : ....

2. New word + stress: .... Plural: ....

3. Definition: ....
....

4. Sentence: ....
....

5. Synonyms: ....
....

9. Drawing

6. Antonyms: ....

7. Related words: ....

8. ....
....

2. New word + stress: .... Plural: ....

3. Definition: ....
....

4. Sentence: ....
....

5. Synonyms: ....
....

9. Drawing

6. Antonyms: ....

7. Related words: ....

8. ....
....

1. Theme № ...... : ....

2. New word + stress: ....   Plural: ....

3. Definition: ....
....

4. Sentence: ....

5. Synonyms: ....   9. Drawing

6. Antonyms: ....

7. Related words: ....
....

8. ....
....
....

2. New word + stress: ....   Plural: ....

3. Definition: ....
....

4. Sentence: ....

5. Synonyms: ....   9. Drawing

6. Antonyms: ....

7. Related words: ....
....

8. ....
....

---

1. Theme № ...... : ....

2. New word + stress: ....   Plural: ....

3. Definition: ....
....

4. Sentence: ....

5. Synonyms: ....   9. Drawing

6. Antonyms: ....

7. Related words: ....
....

8. ....
....
....

2. New word + stress: ....   Plural: ....

3. Definition: ....
....

4. Sentence: ....

5. Synonyms: ....   9. Drawing

6. Antonyms: ....

7. Related words: ....
....

8. ....
....

Notes

Notes

Appendix 3: Bookmark (pre-patterned diary)

Vocabulary strategies

1. Theme
Place the word in a suitable thematic category.
E.g.: 'haggis' and 'custard' belong to the general field of 'food'

2. Stress & Plural form
Write down the new word, indicate its word stress, and put it in the plural.
E.g.: product - products

3. Definition
Provide a definition in English.
E.g.: to repeat = to say again

4. Sentence
Use the word in a meaningful sentence.

5. Synonyms
Look for words with comparable meanings.
E.g.: large = fat = long

6. Antonyms
Provide the opposite(s).
E.g.: big ⋊ small

7. Related words
Look for related nouns, verbs, adjectives.
E.g.: to repeat - a repetition – repetitive

8. Miscellaneous
Write down what this word reminds you of, e.g.: expressions, words that rhyme with it, the place where you encountered it,... (Be creative!)

9. Drawing
Concrete words can be drawn.
E.g.: a tree – the branches, the leaves,...

Name: ....

Class: ....

"Vocabularies are crossing circles and loops. We are defined by the lines we choose to cross or to be confined by."
– A.S. Byatt –

© Karen Seberechts

Appendix 4: Vocabulary test unit 4 (fourth grade)

First name & last name: Class:

Date: /25

SCHEPPERS MECHELEN
onze school

Test: Vocabulary Unit 4

1. **IN THE FOLLOWING LOGBOOK TEXT SOME WORDS HAVE BEEN LEFT OUT.**   **/8**
   - **IN THE LEFT-HAND COLUMN, PUT AN "X" WHERE A WORD HAS BEEN OMITTED.**
   - **IN THE RIGHT-HAND COLUMN, CIRCLE THE WORD THAT HAS BEEN OMITTED.**

A SLIGHTLY DIFFERENT HOLIDAY

Last year, I did not spend my holiday X but I stayed at my cousin's X near Bruges. When I arrived, she X me with plenty of information about the region and introduced me to her X help, Leila. Afterwards, she left to do some more filming in Cannes.	outdoors – abroad – out of town country house – shed – residential area donated – equipped – provided live-in – residential – residing
I really enjoyed my X in the luxury of her home and I really liked Leila, because every day she filled the fridge to the X with delicious goodies and snacks.	stay – living - residence top – brim – edge
My cousin does not live far from the city centre, which is X in history and tradition. At the same time, visitors can always be X of a warm welcome in the shops and bars. This was really a holiday of a lifetime.	steeped – immersed – buried ensured – insured – assured

X

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IX

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Name
E-mail Address
SIGN-UP >>

The Hotel Nadir << BACK

The Hotel Nadir ★★★★
Location: Sardinia, Italy

Price based for 7 nights, for 2 adult(s), 0 child(ren) and 0 infant(s).

Price per person: £ 369.00

Hotel Nadir in Castelsardo is a superb 4 star hotel situated in a panoramic position over the sea. The hotel is completely air-conditioned and fully equipped to satisfy the guests' r.*equirements*……………… .

The hotel consists of 27 twin rooms and 5 junior suites, furnished in a modern style and fitted with satellite TV, safety box, mini bar and hair.*dryer*……………… . Rooms equipped for the a.*ccommodation*……… of guests with special needs can be found on every floor. Rooms are a.*vailable*……………… on a half board basis. Breakfast and dinner are served in the lovely terraced restaurant with a spectacular panorama of the Gulf of Asinara. Upgrades to rooms with a sea v.*iew*……………… and balcony can be obtained for an a.*dditional*……………… cost.

There is access to a public beach just 200 metres from the hotel. If you want to explore the area there is a public shuttle bus that takes you to the centre of Castelsardo or the beaches in Lu Bagnu. In Castelsardo you can r.*ent*……………… cars, motorbikes, bicycles, rubber boats, water scooters. Other *facilities / amenities* include guided excursions to the National Park of Asinara, fishing excursions, off road excursions, hiking, and guided visits to the ethnographic or archeological museum. Only 15 km from the hotel, on the coastal road, hidden in green s.*urroundings*…………, there is a fantastic aquatic park called 'Water Paradise'. You can also take advantage of the bus service to and from the major l.*ocations*……………… *(places)* in the North of the island.

3. WHAT DOES YOUR FAVOURITE HOLIDAY COTTAGE LOOK LIKE? /7

- DRAW A *light bulb*, A *swing*, AND A *chimney* IN A SUITABLE PLACE.

- DRAW (AT LEAST) <u>FOUR OTHER</u> OBJECTS OR ROOMS THAT CAN BE FOUND IN OR AROUND YOUR FAVOURITE HOLIDAY HOME. NUMBER THESE OBJECTS AND WRITE THE CORRESPONDING WORDS DOWN IN THE BOX.

1.	2. ....
3.	4. ....

XII
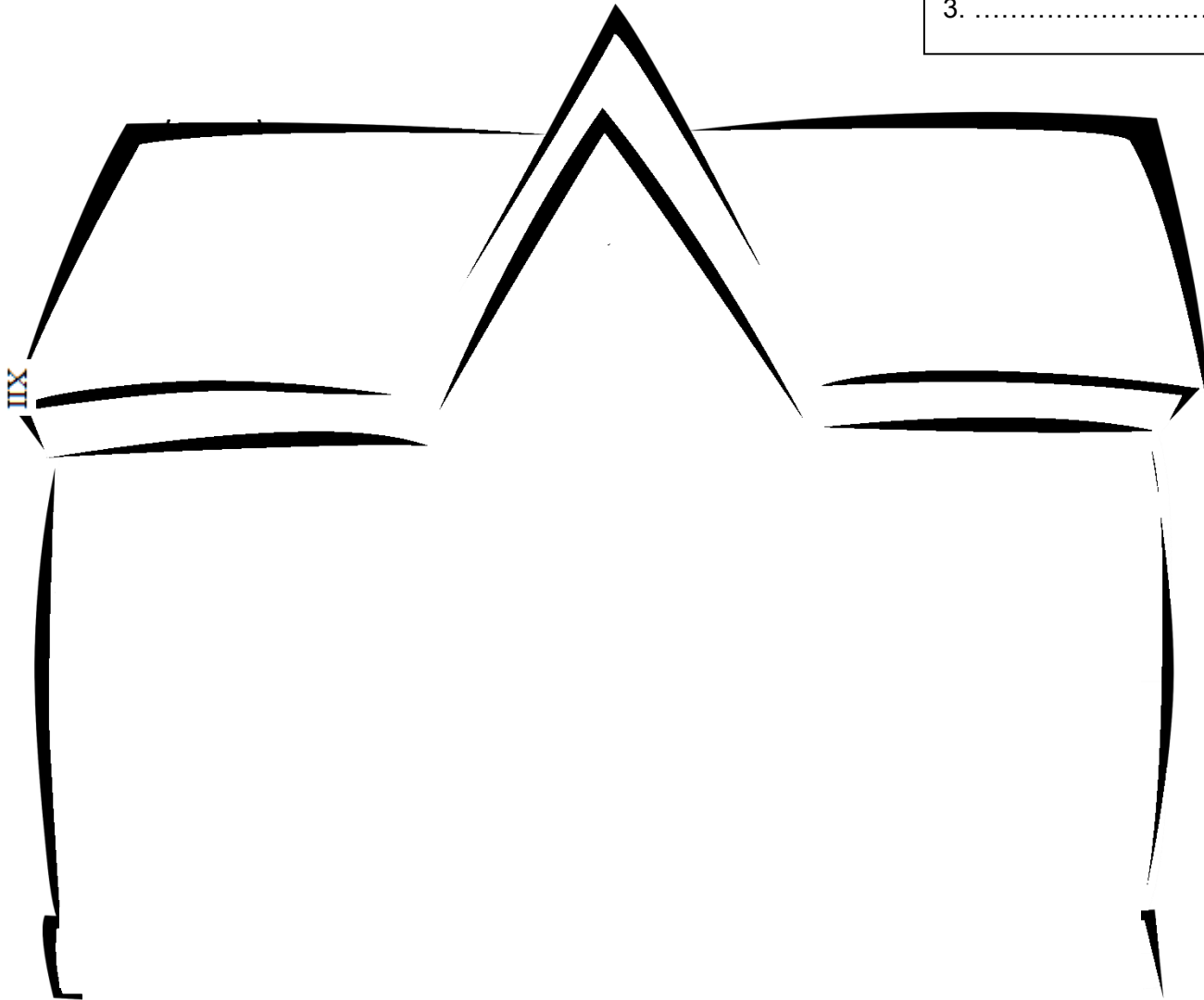
Appendix 5: Vocabulary test unit 3 (sixth grade)

Name & Surname: Class:

Date: **/30**

SCHEPPERS MECHELEN
onze school

Test: Vocabulary Unit 3

2. **FILL IN THE GAPS.**   **/11**

The 20th century was the age of f…*ossil*……………. f…*uels*………………: coal, oil and natural gas. They might become …*depleted*……. in the foreseeable future. The costs associated with our ….*present*………. *(current)* energy system are immense.

G.*lobal*…………… w.*arming*………… can cause all kinds of catastrophes. The carbon dioxide ..*emission(s)*…… must be reduced by at least 70 per cent. A shift to r.*enewable*………. energy is necessary.

Europe g.*enerates*………. about 70 per cent of the total capacity of wind power. Wind resources onshore, as well as .*offshore*………., could provide more than four times global electricity c.*onsumption*……. .

Solar .*power*…………. is another option, since photovoltaics can easily be connected to the electricity …*grid*…………… .

3. **IN THE FOLLOWING TEXT SOME WORDS HAVE BEEN LEFT OUT.**   **/9**
   - **IN THE LEFT-HAND COLUMN, PUT AN "X" WHERE A WORD HAS BEEN OMITTED.**
   - **IN THE RIGHT-HAND COLUMN, CIRCLE THE WORD THAT HAS BEEN OMITTED.**

Since the first drilling**X** was built in Pennsylvania in 1859, petroleum**X** have been looking for "the black gold" in places that were likely to produce oil worth extracting in**X**quantities. These**X**materials may well be exhausted in the**X**future, but even this thesis is not generally accepted. Saudi Aramco, the	rug - rig - rag - riff bores - engineers - hoses - producers applicable - viable - verifiable - pliable dry - rough - crude - raw inevitable - predictable - probable - foreseeable

XIII

world's largest oil X maintains that recoverable X are sufficient for another 140 years, provided demand remains stable on the present level.	bore - company - giant - customer stocks - resources - sources - supplies
Many X think that this theory will be an excuse for continuing the X use of natural resources.	naturists - socialists - environmentalists - aids profitable - profligate - considerate - intricate

4. PROVIDE THE WORD THAT MATCHES THE DESCRIPTION. /5

- People who feel that things are going very badly and are likely to get even worse are
  doom-mongers .
- The opposite of deep water is *shallow* water.
- If you *curb* something, you control it and keep it within limits.
- Ingenuity means being skilled at inventing new things. However, if you are an
  ingenuous person, you are innocent, trusting, and honest.
- If you make a *mockery* of something, you make fun of it and make it appear worthless and foolish.

5. WRITE THE CORRESPONDING WORDS DOWN IN THE BOX. /5
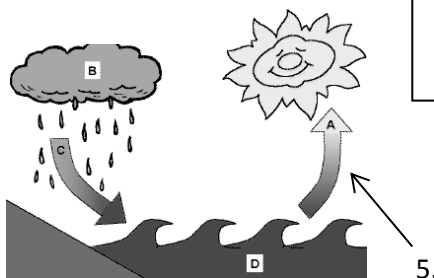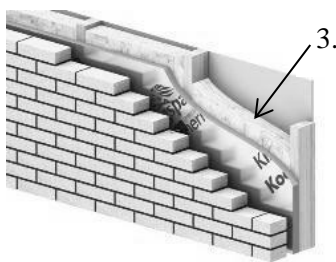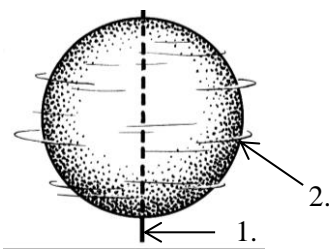
1. *axis*
2. *perimeter*
3. *insulation (foam)*
4. *downpour*
5. *evaporation*

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Appendix 6: Survey – Evaluation of the pre-patterned diary

Universiteit Antwerpen
Language Diary: Evaluation

I am happy that you have participated in my study and made use of the language diary. To finalise the project, I would like to invite you to share your experiences with me. This questionnaire will help me to evaluate the efficiency and usability of the language diary. Completing it will only take 5 to 10 minutes and the data which you provide will be treated confidentially.
Thank you for your participation!
Karen Seberechts.

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Universiteit Antwerpen
Language Diary: Evaluation

Part 1: Efficiency - Efficacy - Effect

＊1. Efficiency of the language diary

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
The language diary looked appealing.	○	○	○	○
The instructions were fairly straightforward and clear.	○	○	○	○
I feel the language diary restricted my freedom.	○	○	○	○
I feel the language diary provided sufficient possibilities to deal with new vocabulary.	○	○	○	○
I would have liked to structure my language diary according to my own needs.	○	○	○	○

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✱2. Efficacy of the language diary

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
I feel the language diary has provided me insights in how I should study English.	○	○	○	○
I do not believe keeping a language diary will improve my language skills.	○	○	○	○
I experienced working with the language diary in a positive way.	○	○	○	○
The language diary stimulated me to reflect on my English language skills.	○	○	○	○
I feel more competent after using the language diary.	○	○	○	○
Completing the language diary has helped me to identify my own strengths.	○	○	○	○
I found completing the language diary unnecessarily complex.	○	○	○	○
I liked using the language diary because it encouraged me to discover language on my own, rather than waiting for explanations from the teacher.	○	○	○	○
I feel I have acquired more knowledge than I would have done without the language diary.	○	○	○	○

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✱3. The effect of the language diary

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
Completing my language diary gave me a sense of achievement.	○	○	○	○
I would like to keep using a language diary.	○	○	○	○
I feel I was not motivated enough to bring the language diary up to date as frequently as I should have.	○	○	○	○
Completing the language diary has stimulated my personal interest in learning English.	○	○	○	○
I feel I have become more self-directed in my learning by using the language diary.	○	○	○	○
Dealing with English vocabulary on a regular basis encouraged me to use more complicated vocabulary in class.	○	○	○	○
I consider using a language diary during other language classes as well.	○	○	○	○
Using the language diary made me feel more confident about my learning abilities.	○	○	○	○
I felt more motivated to read texts and deal with new vocabulary on a regular basis.	○	○	○	○
I feel more confident after using the language diary.	○	○	○	○

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Part 2: Sufficiency

Please write down some general remarks by answering the following questions.

＊4. How did you experience working with the language diary?

＊5. What according to you are the weak points of the language diary?

＊6. What according to you are the strong points of the language diary?

＊7. What would you like to change/improve?

＊8. Would you recommend the language diary to others?

○ Yes

○ No

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Thank you for your time!

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Appendix 7: Survey – Evaluation of the blank diary

Language Diary: Evaluation

I am happy that you have participated in my study and made use of the language diary. To finalise the project, I would like to invite you to share your experiences with me. This questionnaire will help me to evaluate the efficiency and usability of the language diary. Completing it will only take 5 to 10 minutes and the data which you provide will be treated confidentially.
Thank you for your participation!
Karen Seberechts.

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Universiteit Antwerpen

Language Diary: Evaluation

Part 1: Efficiency - Efficacy - Effect

＊1. Efficiency of the language diary

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
The language diary looked appealing.	○	○	○	○
The instructions were fairly straightforward and clear.	○	○	○	○
I feel the teacher introduced us to sufficient possibilities to deal with new vocabulary.	○	○	○	○
I feel the language diary allowed me too much freedom.	○	○	○	○
I would have preferred a "ready-made" language diary.	○	○	○	○

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Universiteit Antwerpen
Language Diary: Evaluation

＊2. Efficacy of the language diary

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
I feel the language diary has provided me insights in how I should study English.	○	○	○	○
I do not believe keeping a language diary will improve my language skills.	○	○	○	○
I experienced working with the language diary in a positive way.	○	○	○	○
The language diary stimulated me to reflect on my English language skills.	○	○	○	○
I feel more competent after using the language diary.	○	○	○	○
Completing the language diary has helped me to identify my own strengths.	○	○	○	○
I found completing the language diary unnecessarily complex.	○	○	○	○
I liked using the language diary because it encouraged me to discover language on my own, rather than waiting for explanations from the teacher.	○	○	○	○
I feel I have acquired more knowledge than I would have done without the language diary.	○	○	○	○

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Universiteit Antwerpen
Language Diary: Evaluation

＊3. The effect of the language diary

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
Completing my language diary gave me a sense of achievement.	○	○	○	○
I would like to keep using a language diary.	○	○	○	○
I feel I did not take enough notes during the introductory session, and consequently did not know how to tackle this assignment properly.	○	○	○	○
I feel I was not motivated enough to bring the language diary up to date as frequently as I should have.	○	○	○	○
Completing the language diary has stimulated my personal interest in learning English.	○	○	○	○
I feel I have become more self-directed in my learning by using the language diary.	○	○	○	○
Dealing with English vocabulary on a regular basis encouraged me to use more complicated vocabulary in class.	○	○	○	○
I consider using a language diary during other language classes as well.	○	○	○	○
Using the language diary made me feel more confident about my learning abilities.	○	○	○	○
I felt more motivated to read texts and deal with new vocabulary on a regular basis.	○	○	○	○
I feel more confident after using the language diary.	○	○	○	○

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Part 2: Sufficiency

Please write down some general remarks by answering the following questions.

＊4. How did you experience working with the language diary?

＊5. What according to you are the weak points of the language diary?

＊6. What according to you are the strong points of the language diary?

＊7. What would you like to change/improve?

＊8. Would you recommend the language diary to others?

○ Yes
○ No

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Thank you for your time!

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