The receptive vocabulary knowledge of English among Flemish primary school students
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Second Language Acquisition (SLA) is the branch in linguistics which focuses on how second languages are acquired. Usually, a second language is acquired in an institutional context, for instance, Flemish children learning French in primary school. They are then called Second Language Learners1, i.e. persons who have had instruction in the second language (Anderson & Freebody, 1983; Laufer, 1989; Goulden, Nation & Read, 1990; Hazenberg & Hulstijn, 1996; Mondria & Wiersma 2004). Sometimes however, a language is spontaneously acquired in natural settings, i.e. by everyday contact with the language. People learning the language by being spontaneously exposed to it, are non-instructed. This paper will deal with non-instructed learners of English, viz. with children of the fifth grade in primary school, which means that they have not yet had any instruction in English.

Flemish youngsters are confronted daily with English via television, radio, songs and the internet. Consequently, they are being exposed to a great deal of English vocabulary. That is why most people assume that even primary school children already know quite some English, even though it has not been taught yet. My aim is to find out how large Flemish children’s English receptive vocabulary actually is and whether there are decisive factors influencing this lexical knowledge, such as motivation and attitudes towards English, the means of contact with English or language aptitude. Moreover, I want to find out whether there is a difference in listening to English words and reading them. Previous research focusing on English vocabulary proficiency among Flemish youngsters (Kooyman, 2000:134; Cassiman, 2005:80; Dermul, 2008:38) showed that youngsters designate television as the primary source of English influence. This leads me to assume that children who watch more English-spoken television programmes will have a greater proficiency in English. Moreover, I believe children will be better in hearing English words, than in reading them. After all, television-programmes are English-spoken, not English-written.

In order to carry out this research, I designed a questionnaire and a vocabulary test. The vocabulary test allows me to investigate the children’s receptive language proficiency.

1 I will discuss the distinction between learning and acquisition in chapter two.
The questionnaire will help me to find out whether there are correlations between the test results and factors influencing the language learner.

This paper consists of two chapters. The first chapter is a general introduction. First, it will deal with some important notions that have been developed in the field of SLA and which are necessary to situate my particular research. Second, I will look at some factors influencing the language learner. Third, I will concentrate on the assessment of vocabulary knowledge. The next chapter concentrates on my research and its findings. In a first stage, I will analyse the children’s attitudes towards SLA and in a second stage, the contact with English will be discussed. In a final stage, I will examine the tests of the children and discuss their lexical knowledge.

Review of the literature

0. Introduction
Before elaborating on my own research, it is necessary to review some important theories that have been developed in the field of SLA. In the following chapter I will concentrate on theories in second language acquisition and on the tests that have been designed to test second language learners’ knowledge, in particular their vocabulary knowledge.

In the first part I will look in detail at notions such as second language and foreign language and to the current status of English in the world. In the second part, I will elaborate on some important distinction made in SLA, paying special attention to acquisition vs. learning; instructed vs. non-instructed language learning; incidental vs. intentional learning and implicit vs. explicit learning. These notions are important to position my specific research topic in the field of SLA in general. We shall also look at factors influencing the language learners, where the importance of age, attitudes/motivation, aptitude/intelligence and finally input/interaction shall be emphasized. These factors all determine second language proficiency, even with children who have not yet been taught English explicitly. The next part
will essentially deal with the assessment of vocabulary knowledge. Firstly, I will introduce some concepts that are important in vocabulary studies. Secondly, I will elaborate on two important vocabulary tests: the Vocabulary Levels Test (Nation 1983) and the Yes/No test (Meara & Buxton 87). The test that I will use for my research, is based on the Yes/No test. Finally, I will briefly discuss the importance of high frequency words when acquiring a new language.

1. English
1.1. First language, second language and foreign language

When the notion second language is used, it is implicitly contrasted with first language, third language and foreign language.

A person’s first language is his/her mother tongue. Klein (2003:4) states ‘that first language acquisition occurs when the learner, usually a child, has been without a language so far and now acquires one’. It is thus the first language that is learned in terms of sequence and usually remains the most important language throughout one’s life (Klein 2003:3). Second language (SL) on the other hand, is the general term that designates any language which is not one’s first language (Ellis 1994:11). Appel & Vermeer (1994: 11) note that the difference between first and second language is essentially based on the sequence of acquisition (L1 is acquired first and L2 second) and not on the level of competence in the language. As such, it is possible that one is more fluent in one’s SL than in one’s native language. For instance, a seven-year old Dutch boy who moves with his parents to Great Britain and then remains there for the rest of his life, thus conducting most conversations in English, will normally have a more thorough command of English than of Dutch. It is also possible that a person’s most fluent language is his/her mother tongue, but that this latter is not the primary language. This is especially the case in multilingual settings, such as in India where English frequently functions as the lingua franca between the different language varieties existing in the country. People who regularly have to deal with these different language communities will thus have one of these varieties as first language, but English, a second language will be the primary language. Appel & Vermeer (1994: 11) also remark that when next to the first language, another language is acquired before the age of four, the distinction between first and second language no longer holds. The process is then called simultaneous language acquisition or bilingualism.

Within the SL group, some people make a further distinction between second, third or even fourth language, based on a person’s competence in the different non-native languages (Ellis, 1994:11).

Generally, one also distinguishes SL from foreign language (FL), but in fact SL comprises FL and is opposed to it at the same time. In its general sense, SL is the general term that designates any language which is not one’s first language (Ellis, 1994: 11), thus including also foreign languages. In its more specific sense, SL is defined as the most frequently used language in the community next to the first language, which has gained an official status and plays an important role in the country’s institutions, for example in education where it is the medium of instruction (Bot, Wander & Verspoor, 2005: 7). In opposition to SL, foreign language is then defined as the language which is taught in school, of which the importance is recognised but which is not used as a medium of communication in the local community (Kachru, 1985, as cited in Crystal, 2005: 107).

Yet, the designation of a language as second or foreign language in a specific setting is not always clear-cut. English in Belgium for example, is considered a foreign language as (1) it is taught at school; (2) it is regarded as an important language; (3) but it is not used as a medium of communication in the local community. However, English occupies an important role in ‘the domain of mass media, technology, international trade, political exchanges and higher education’ here in Belgium (Goethals, 1997: 107). Van Parijs (2007: 3) mapped the increasing knowledge of English among young Belgians which leads him to posit that the study of English will eventually undermine the Flemish students’ will to learn French and the Walloon students’ will to learn Dutch, English ultimately functioning as an internal lingua
franca between Belgium’s two main language communities. Though this claim may be exaggerated, it does draw attention to the importance of English in Belgium.

Despite the distinction between SL and FL, the term second language acquisition (SLA) is often used to refer to both SL and FL, as it is believed that the process which underlies the acquisition is similar (Bot & al 2005: 7). Ellis also supports the idea of SLA as an overarching term. He says:

‘The distinction between second and foreign language learning settings may be significant in that it is possible that there will be radical differences in both what is learnt and how it is learnt. However, for the time being the extent to which the sociolinguistic conditions of learning determine learning outcomes or learning processes must remain an open question […] There is a need for a neutral and superordinate term to cover both types of learning. Somewhat confusingly, but in line with common usage, the term second language acquisition will be used for this purpose’ (Ellis 1994: 12)

In conclusion, Kachru (1988: 5) represented the three ways of acquiring and using a language (specifically English) – as first, second or foreign language- schematically as three concentric circles (see figure 1): (1) The inner circle comprises the traditionally English-speaking countries where English is the first language, such as Great Britain, Ireland, the USA, Canada, Australia and New Zealand; (2) The outer or extended circle includes the former colonised countries such as Zambia, India, Malawi where English is important for historical reasons and functions as second language; (3) the expanding circle is composed of the countries in which English functions as foreign language, namely the countries ‘which recognize the importance of English as an international language, though they do not have a history of colonization (…), nor have they given English any special status in their language policy’ (Crystal 2003: 107).

Figure 1: Kachru’s three concentric circles (1985)

1.2. Second Languages

Siegel (2006: 178) distinguishes ‘various sociolinguistic settings for SLA on the basis of the functional roles and domains of use of the L1 and L2’. Table 1 presents the sociolinguistic settings for SLA based ‘on the particular variety of the L2 which provides the input’.

<table>
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<th>Setting</th>
<th>Typical learners</th>
<th>L2</th>
<th>Examples</th>
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<td>Dominant L2</td>
<td>Speakers of minority languages (e.g., immigrants, swamped indigenous people)</td>
<td>Dominant or majority language</td>
<td>Turks learning German in Germany; Native Americans learning Spanish in Peru</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>External L2</td>
<td>Speakers of the dominant language</td>
<td>Foreign or distant language</td>
<td>Japanese learning English in Japan; English speakers in Western Canada learning French</td>
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<tr>
<td>Coexisting L2</td>
<td>Speakers in multilingual environments</td>
<td>Nearby language spoken by a large proportion of the population</td>
<td>German speakers learning French in Switzerland</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Institutional L2

Speakers in
Multilingual
environments

Indigenous or
imported language
with a wide range
of official uses

English in India;
Swahili in Tanzania;
English in Samoa

Minority L2

Speakers of the
dominant language

Language of
minority group
(indigenous or
immigrant)

English speakers learning
Welsh or Panjabi

Table 1: The sociolinguistic setting for SLA (Siegel, 2006: 179)

As such, Siegel’s proposal takes more aspects into account compared to Judd (1978, as cited in Ellis 1994: 216-221) who identified only three L2 settings: (1) majority language contexts, (2) L2 official language contexts and (3) L2 international language contexts. Judd did not mention L2 minority setting, and L2 coexisting setting is considered part of L2 official language context.

In the dominant L2 setting, the L2 is the majority language, viz. the variety used by the largest part of the population and used in all domains of society. So, if persons speaking a minority language, usually members of ethnic minorities such as immigrants, want to integrate into this society and be a part of it, they need to learn the dominant L2 (Siegel, 2006: 179). Richards (1972, as cited in Ellis 1994: 217) notes that minority speakers almost never achieve full knowledge and proficiency in the dominant L2 but that a kind of ‘immigrant interlanguage’ develops. Here follows the example of an immigrant interlanguage of a Puerto Rican man living in New Jersey (Fishman, Cooper & Conrad, as cited in Ellis, 1994: 217):

No make any difference, but I like when I go because I don’t have too many time for buy and the little time we buy have to go some place and I find everything there.

However, it is possible that language learners attain a near-native proficiency in the language. Taylor (1980, as cited in Ellis 1994: 217-218) noticed that at first immigrants will try to hold on to their own language, next serious efforts will be made to acquire the dominant L2 language and finally the immigrants will try to continue to speak their own minority language as well, the result of which is referred to as additive bilingualism. It should be noted that one’s efforts to attain near-native proficiency in the dominant language also depends on society’s attitude towards immigrants in general, viz. if immigrants are considered inferior to natives then the former will probably be less willing to acquire the dominant language.

In the external L2 setting, the L2 can be viewed as a foreign language. Siegel (2006: 179) makes a distinction between foreign language as such, language spoken in a distant part of the same country and a world lingua franca. However, I think it is possible to view all these as foreign languages as defined in 1.1. In this setting the L2 functions as ‘a means of communication […] in a wide range of contexts: business and trade, academic and scientific, media and the arts, travel and tourism, literature’ (Ellis 1994: 220) and is more characterised by non-native-speaker/non-native-speaker interaction than by non-native-speaker/native-speaker interaction (Kachru, 1986: 16, as cited in Ellis, 1994: 221).

In the coexisting L2 setting, a multilingual setting, the L1 of the one person’s language community is as important as the L1 of the other person in the nearby language community. Both L1s are equally important in all domains of society and they also have the same status. This is due to the fact that almost equally even parts of the population speak respectively the two varieties as L1, hence it is interesting for the one language group to learn the neighbouring group’s language. Belgium is an excellent example of a coexisting L2 setting: Dutch and French (and German) are the land’s official languages and are taught from primary school onwards (Siegel, 2006: 180). As already mentioned, Judd (1978, as cited in Ellis, 1994: 216-221) does not treat the coexisting L2 setting as a separate one but instead he categorizes it as a special type of the majority language context (dominant L2 setting). So whereas Siegel takes into account the number of people who learn the other language and whether or not this is a bi-directional process, Judd does not do so.
In the institutional L2 setting, the L2 is primarily used for institutional goals. It is thus not necessarily learned by all members of the population, only by those who will be needing it. The institutional L2 setting is especially found in countries which have been under European colonial rule for a long time (Ellis, 1994: 218). Siegel (2006: 180) notes that the institutional L2 can be of two natures: ‘it can either be the former colonial language (English in India) or one of the indigenous languages of the country (Swahili in Tanzania)’. The latter is especially the case in those countries which wanted to mark their independence from the former occupier. Whereas some people may resist learning the L2 in dominant L2 settings as an expression of their cultural and/or ethnic identity, this is less the case in the institutional L2 setting. However, exceptions do exist, consider for instance the anti-English movement in India (Ellis, 1994: 219). Ellis also remarks that it is especially in this setting that pidgins or new local standard varieties such as New Englishes develop.

Finally, in the minority L2 setting ‘speakers of a dominant language learn a minority language, usually in naturalistic rather than classroom contexts’ (Siegel, 2006: 182). In this way, the minority L2 opposes itself to the external L2, which is learned in a classroom context.

1.3. Americanization and disintegration catastrophe
This overall influence and spread of English in the world has led to some concern among some British and Americans with regard to the future of the English language. Two catastrophes are envisaged: the Americanization catastrophe and the disintegration catastrophe. However, Trudgill (2002: 148) reassures people that these two scenarios are wrong and will never happen. The adepts of the Americanization catastrophe fear the following:

‘in the English-speaking world a process of cultural and linguistic homogenisation, brought about mainly by the influence of the electronic media, whereby before very long we will (...) also all [be] speaking a single (and of course, the implication is, undesirable) form of United States English. (Trudgill, 2002: 147)

This view of the future of English is not surprising, given the fact that most children claim to come in contact with English via the bias of American soap-operas and the use of the internet (Dermul, 2008; Demeulemaere, 1995; Kooyman, 2000). Moreover, English is now the established lingua franca in a wide variety of domains. As a result the language will even spread more: the more people speak a certain language, the more there will be opportunities to learn the language and the more opportunities people will get to practice the language, which has as a consequence that those people will encourage other people even more to learn the language, and so on. The fear of a homogenous American English thus sounds reasonable, especially at the lexical level. Trudgill notes for instance that there are already some ‘typical American words’ which have entered the lexicon of British as well as of Australian English. However, this also works in other directions: there are already ample typically South African English and typically Australian English words that have entered the worldwide English lexicon (crook, bushman, outback, Afrikaner, apartheid, etc.). This process of borrowing words is perfectly normal and is an inherent trait of nearly all languages. On the grammatical level on the other hand, the spread of American English is much more reduced. Trudgill (2002: 148) gives the example of hopefully, which until the 1970s functioned as a manner adverbial in British English but in American English, it had both the function of manner adverbial and sentence adverbial, the latter of which came to be used in British English also from the 1970s onwards. Though at first sight, this seems to be an instance of American English homogenization at the grammatical level, there are nonetheless linguists who doubt this claim and suggest that it could also be an independent development of British English, which occurred later than in American English and which is thus not a loan from American English. The phonological level seems to favour the disintegration hypothesis, the fear that the success of English itself, viz. the use of English by more non-native speakers than by native
speakers, will lead to a 'series of increasingly mutually unintelligible dialects and eventually into different languages (Trudgill, 2002: 148). In each of many varieties of English in the world, different phonological changes are occurring and some of these are even displaying opposite evolutions (Trudgill, 2002: 149). Trudgill cites the example of the DRESS-vowel which in New Zealand now occupies a position closer than [e] in the vowel system. This new position engenders for example two /æ/ varieties, namely [ɪt] and [ɪɅt]. Trudgill (2002: 151) also notes that some non-native English speakers have invented English words, which do not exist in the British or American varieties, such as lifting, wellness, handy or pullunder. However, assuming that these kinds of evolutions will lead to totally disperse and mutually incomprehensible varieties of English is exaggerated. In the same way as loans and borrowing words from other languages is inherent to linguistic evolution, different phonological changes are 'the normal pattern of linguistic change' (Trudgill, 2002: 147). In fact, the Americanization, a homogenization theory, itself counters the disintegration hypothesis. The fact that people will nearly always hear and get in contact with American English via television, computer etc. makes sure that the American phonological system will be heard and understood anywhere, thus preventing the World Englishes from becoming mutually unintelligible. Trudgill's conclusion (2002: 149) shows that there is indeed a homogenization at the level of lexis but a disintegration at the phonological level, which, however, will not lead to either homogenization or disintegration of English.

‘the electronic media, contrary to widespread popular belief, do not play a very big role in the diffusion of linguistic innovations. Speakers can, and do, learn new words and phrases from the TV, but sound changes require face-to-face contact for diffusion (through accommodation) to take place. Speakers need to interact with one another for changes in the central phonological and grammatical systems of language to be transmitted – and there is no spoken interaction with the television set.’
2. Basic notions in SLA
2.1. Acquisition versus learning

There is a difference between acquiring a second language through spontaneous communication in social natural situations and acquiring a language with the help of some intentional intervention (for example by a grammar handbook or in class). According to Krashen (1976, as cited in Larsen-Freeman & Long, 1991: 240), these two processes are completely divergent and he therefore developed his Monitor Model (Krashen, 1976) in which he proposed a dichotomy between acquisition and learning. On the one hand, there is the acquired knowledge of a language (the most important one), which ‘is the product of application by learners of the same (unspecified) language-learning abilities children used for their first language acquisition’ (Larsen-Freeman & Long, 1991: 240). It is thus a subconscious process which resembles the process of learning a first language. The learned knowledge of a language on the other hand, ‘is the product of formal instruction (typically classroom language teaching) and comprises conscious knowledge of easy SL grammatical rules […]’ (Larsen-Freeman & Long, 1991: 240). This is a conscious process, i.e. one is aware of the fact of studying a language, paying attention to all kinds of rules as for instance subject-verb agreement. According to Krashen (1976, as cited in Larsen-Freeman & Long, 1991: 241) only the acquired knowledge allows people to communicate, to use language in everyday situations, whereas the learned knowledge only serves as a monitor, meant to control the output.

These two systems operate independently and ‘there is no cross-over or interface, e.g. through some consciousness-raising process’ (Schmidt 1988b, as cited in Larsen-Freeman & Long, 1991: 241). In other words, learned knowledge can never pass into acquired knowledge. This position is known as the non-interface position. So in the same way that acquired knowledge of a language can only be used in everyday communication, acquired knowledge also only develops itself in everyday communication, viz. ‘when the learner’s attention is focused on message conveyance [whereas] neither practice nor error correction enables 'learned' knowledge to become 'acquired'” (Ellis, 1994: 356).

Ellis (1994: 356) concludes correctly that though it is possible to accept Krashen’s dichotomy between acquisition and learning, it is more difficult with respect to the non-interface position. Others such as Anderson (1983), De Graaff (1997) and Schmidt (1990, 1995, 2001) are adherents of the interface position. They believe that (1) learned knowledge can transform itself to acquired knowledge by using the language (e.g. also by reading, singing songs, etc.) (strong interface position) or that (2) learned knowledge cannot be transformed into acquired knowledge, but that it may facilitate acquisition (weak interface position).

Between 1978 and 1985 the Monitor Model (1976) underwent some modifications after which it became known as the Monitor Theory of SLA and which comprised five major hypotheses (in Larsen-Freeman & Long, 1991: 241-244; Bot & al, 2005: 36):

1. The Acquisition-Learning Hypothesis explains the difference between acquisition and learning as respectively a subconscious and conscious process (see discussion above).
2. The Natural Order Hypothesis states that grammatical rules are acquired in a predictable order. This order is independent of the language learner’s age, L1 background or of the amount of input he has received. Some structures are just acquired earlier than others. It is important to note that the sequence in which people acquire grammatical structures is not identical to the way these are taught or presented in handbooks or language classes.
3. The Monitor Hypothesis explains the relationship, or rather the non-relationship, between the acquired and learned knowledge. Only the acquired knowledge can be used to communicate naturally whereas the learned knowledge only serves as a monitor controlling the input. The two systems work separately, there is thus no relationship.
4. The Input Hypothesis tries to explain how language learners acquire the L2, namely through the availability of comprehensible input. This is input which is one level above the current understanding. Yet the totality of input can be understood through the help
of the co-text, situational context, knowledge of the world etc. Once understood, the new structures (lexis, morphology, syntax, etc.) are acquired and may serve in their turn as co-textual help to understanding new kinds of structures. This hypothesis has attracted a certain amount of criticism.

5. The Affective Filler Hypothesis states that a number of affective variables (motivation, self-confidence and anxiety) may influence the success of language acquisition. That is to say, if the filter is up (no motivation, no self-confidence and anxiety) comprehensible input will be blocked, hence preventing acquisition. On the contrary, if the filter is down, it may certainly help language acquisition, but by itself it is not sufficient to guarantee acquisition.

As said, acquisition is believed to be a subconscious process whereas learning is a conscious one. Schmidt (1990: 134) remarked that the use of the term subconscious is rather inappropriate because it technically means being without awareness. However, acquiring a new language always implies some degree of awareness. Bot & al (2005: 8) believe that subconscious refers to ‘the inability to explain what one knows’. Concretely, one may know that the third person singular of the verb to make requires a final –s, without being able to explain this process. From this point of view, Bot & al (2005: 8) conclude that

‘acquisition is seen as a natural process of growth of knowledge and skills in a language without a level of meta-knowledge about the language, while learning is seen as an artificial process in which the rules of a language are focussed on’.

Though Ellis (1994: 356) states that it is possible to accept Krashen’s acquisition-learning dichotomy, he himself does not wish to follow it. Instead, he distinguishes naturalistic from instructed SLA, based on the settings and activities in which people learn a language (Ellis, 1994: 12). He speaks of naturalistic SLA when ‘the language is learnt through communication that takes place in naturally occurring social situations’ and of instructed SLA when ‘it is learnt through study, with the help of ‘guidance’ from reference books or classroom instruction’ (Ellis, 1994: 12). This distinction however, does not immediately make clear that some learners in naturalistic settings focus especially on the form of the language or just communicate to practice their learned knowledge. ‘There is thus no necessary connection between setting and type of learning’ (Ellis, 1994: 215). Klein (1986: 20) does follow Krashen’s dichotomy but prefers the terms spontaneous and guided learning, as he does not agree with the non-interface position. For instance, in explaining Krashen’s Monitor Theory he uses both the terms acquisition-learning and spontaneous and guided SLA interchangeably:

The [Monitor] theory underlines the distinction between guided and spontaneous language acquisition. In both cases, however, the crucial element is ‘acquisition’ in the sense of a subconscious process governed by certain rules. The ‘learning’ (and, indirectly, teaching) in which the learner is involved exerts, to a certain extent, a controlling influence upon the ‘acquisition’ of the language. (Klein, 1986: 28)

2.2. Instructed versus non-instructed SLA
A related distinction in SLA, is the difference between instructed and non-instructed SLA. Instructed language learning means that a person learns a language primarily through education. Non-instructed language learning on the other hand, implies learning a language through everyday-contact. Whereas acquisition does not involve special attention to the language, non-instructed language learning does: there is a need to know the language and as it is not explicitly taught, one has to pay attention to speech in informal situations in order to learn it.

Bot & al (2005: 12) give the example of migrants moving into a setting, who have to “pick up” the new language from what they hear and see in the environment.
Another example, is “picking up” languages via popular culture, such as getting in contact with English via television, radio or the internet... Bot & al (2005: 12) emphasize that especially English is acquired in a context where both instructed and non-instructed SLA are combined. This is the case in Belgium: English is taught in secondary school, it is very much present in popular culture and the language is important in industry and trade.

2.3. Incidental versus intentional language learning

' [...] the labels incidental and intentional learning have been used to refer to widely differing constructs over a period of more than five decades. They have been used differently (i) across disciplines (e.g., psychology vs. first and second language acquisition vs. education and language pedagogy), (ii) over time within disciplines (e.g., behaviourist vs. early vs. late cognitive psychology; acquisition of grammar vs. acquisition of vocabulary), and (iii) between dimensions of academic inquire (theory construction vs. development of research methods).’ (Hulstijn, 2006: 373)

Hulstijn points out that it is difficult to precisely label the terms incidental and intentional. Despite this, intentional language learning is generally seen as the process whereby the learner actively concentrates on the language’s structure, word meanings, grammatical features etc. and makes a conscious effort to memorize all these. Examples are studying word lists by heart, memorizing the grammatical rules about verb inflection or reading a text and then finding out the meaning of a given set of words. Incidental language learning on the other hand is usually referred to as picking up or inferring words and grammatical structures from the context in the course of communicative events, i.e. the learner is not focussed on the language form (Bot & al, 2005: 10; Hulstijn, 2006: 349). Schmidt (1994a, as cited in Doughty & Long, 2006: 357) defines incidental learning as follows: (i) learning without the intent to learn, (ii) the learning of one stimulus aspect while paying attention to another stimulus aspect and (iii) the learning of one thing (e.g., grammar) when the learner’s primary objective is to do something else (e.g., communicate). These two definitions clearly explain the difference between incidental and intentional, but they also remind us of Krashen...

If we recall Krashen’s distinction between acquisition and learning, the former being a subconscious process focussing only on the message and the latter a conscious process giving attention to the form of the language, it seems that the incidental-intentional dichotomy is comparable to the acquisition-learning one. It is not difficult to see that intentional language learning is indeed a form of Krashen’s learning, i.e. a conscious focus on certain formal language aspects. But incidental language learning and language acquisition however, are not the same. In fact, they differ in two important respects which are causally linked (unfortunately not always emphasized in the literature):

1. incidental language learning, in contrast to language acquisition, always takes place in language learning contexts (such as classrooms).
2. incidental language learning, as opposed to language acquisition, also involves a focus of attention on the language forms, though to a lesser extent as in intentional learning.

This explains for instance why the term is incidental language learning and not incidental language acquisition.

1. Incidental language learning always takes place in language learning contexts. Each study concerning incidental learning reported upon in Hulstijn (2006, 349-373) takes place in a language learning context: either students are asked to read a text carefully and announced comprehension questions will be asked afterwards, however in the end they are instructed to give the meaning of certain words figuring in the text (Hulstijn 1992); or students are provided with data containing several relative clauses and are asked to focus on the meaning of the sentences but are then tested on their acquisition of various types of relative clauses (Doughty, 1991; Robinson, 1997); or the participants are shown a subtitled television
programme after which they are assessed on their retention of the words and the knowledge of their meanings (Van de Poel & d’Ydewalle, 1997). Each of these situations in which incidental knowledge is tested does not reflect the picking up of words or grammatical structures in the course of everyday communicative events, as the definition in fact suggests. The participants are provided with data, and though they are asked to focus on the meaning or retention of words and not on the language form, the very situation in which this task takes place, heightens their involvement of attention to the overall linguistic information. It is thus this language learning context which causes the focus on the language forms (2). There will thus for instance be a difference in results between:

A. Participants who are asked to watch a subtitled television programme and are afterwards tested on the meanings of words figuring in the programme, as in the study by Van de Poel & d’Ydewalle (2001). The knowledge tested here, can be considered incidental knowledge, as the participants, knowing they will be tested afterwards, display a higher degree of attention to the language forms.

B. Participants who are selected on the basis of whether they watch a certain television programme and who are then tested on the meanings of words which frequently figure in that specific programme, without being shown a particular episode of that television programme in advance. The type of knowledge can be considered acquired knowledge, as the participants are tested on their knowledge of several words, which they may have come in contact with in natural surroundings (at home on the television) but not in formal, i.e. class context, situations.

Now, since we know that incidental language learning does contain a degree of awareness to the language form, as opposed to acquisition, the claim that incidental and intentional learning differ, respectively in the absence and presence of attention to the form, can no longer be upheld. Therefore I suggest the following, and in my opinion a more accurate definition (adapted from Hulstijn, 2006: 361).

‘Both incidental and intentional are learning strategies which take place in a language learner environment. They share the involvement of attention and noticing, but they differ in that intentional learning does, and incidental does not, imply the use of deliberate retention techniques.’

Now that we have established the difference between incidental language learning and acquisition and have developed a more suitable definition of the difference between incidental and intentional language learning, we will examine more closely which of the latter two proves best in language instruction, and more particularly in vocabulary instruction. Generally it is assumed that most L1 and L2 vocabulary is learned in an incidental rather than an intentional manner. Learning words as ‘the by-product of reading and listening activities’ (Hulstijn, 2006: 362) is thus considered more effective than activities aimed at the explicit instruction and memorization of lexis. This is undoubtedly the case for the mother tongue lexis, but whether this hypothesis remains valid with regard to L2 vocabulary remains the question. Proponents of incidental instruction regularly refer to immersion programmes. For instance, Wode (1999, as cited in Hulstijn, 2006: 363) studied the productive vocabulary size of German secondary school children who participated in an immersion programme, viz. next to the course ‘English as a foreign language’ they received one more subject (history) in the English language. Afterwards, Wode had the participants take an oral production post-test and he concluded that the immersion group used a much larger vocabulary than the non-immersion group. Immersion programmes are thus beneficial for vocabulary-learning. The problem, however, is that in practice these programmes rarely take place due to more practical problems, which I will not elaborate on. So the question is, do the incidental instruction modes, which do take place in practice, such as vocabulary learning through reading novels, have a beneficial effect? Pitts, White & Krashen (1989, as cited in Hulstijn, 2006: 363) conducted a research among two groups of ESL learners. One group was asked to read two chapters of Anthony Burgess ‘A Clockwork Orange’, a novel which contained 241 unfamiliar words, referred to as nadsat words. A subsequent test assessed the
participants’ comprehension of the nadsat words. Pitts & al discovered that there was only a small difference in vocabulary comprehension size between the group who had read the novel and the group who hadn’t. The researchers concluded that ‘L2 learners can acquire vocabulary by reading’, however, they do not necessarily do. Similarly, Horst, Cobb & Meara (1998, as cited in Hulstijn, 2006: 351) concluded from their research that ‘a small but substantial amount of incidental vocabulary learning can occur as the result of reading a simplified novel’ (214), but also that the ‘power of incidental L2 vocabulary learning may have been overestimated (220)’.

Moreover, the retention rates are far more elevated for intentional instruction modes. Hulstijn (2002, as cited in Hulstijn, 2006:365) for example asked two groups to read a text, containing 907 words, of which 12 were pseudo-words. The first group was told a reading comprehension test would follow while the second group was told a vocabulary-retention task would follow. In the immediate post-test which tested the pseudo-words in isolation, the incidental group could recall only 4% of the word meanings whereas the intentional group 53%; in a subsequent post-test in which the co-text was available again, the incidental group remembered 43% and the intentional group 73%. It thus seems to appear that that intentional learning results in better vocabulary retention than incidental learning (leaving aside the immersion programmes).

2.4. Implicit versus explicit language learning
The implicit-explicit distinction is even more problematic, as it has been equated and used interchangeably with both the acquisition-learning and the incidental-intentional dichotomy.

Bot & al (2005: 9) define implicit and explicit learning as follows:

‘Implicit learning is acquisition of knowledge about the underlying structure of a complex stimulus environment by a process that takes place naturally, simply and without conscious operations. Explicit learning is a more conscious operation where the individual makes and tests hypotheses in a search for structure.’

This definition clearly reminds us of Krashen’s acquisition-learning distinction, which is also predominantly based upon the respective absence and presence of conscious operations. Ellis even says explicitly that ‘[i]t is clear that the acquisition/learning distinction mirrors the implicit/explicit distinction’ and that even Krashen himself acknowledges this. Likewise, in explaining the (non-) interface discussion, one researcher uses the terms acquisition and learning (Ellis, 1994:356; Schmidt 1988b, as cited in Larsen-Freeman & Long 1991:241), while the other implicit and explicit (Bot & al, 2005: 62; DeKeyser 2006: 315).

DeKeyser (2006: 321) also defines implicit and explicit in a manner which reminds us very much of incidental-intentional:

‘[…] an instructional treatment is explicit if rule explanation forms part of the instruction (deduction) or if learners are asked to attend to particular forms and try to find the rules themselves (induction). ‘conversely, when neither rule presentation nor directions to attend to particular forms were part of a treatment, that treatment was considered implicit’ (Norris & Ortega, 2000: 437)’ (DeKeyser, 2006: 321)

As opposed to our first definition, here the predominant characteristic of implicit/explicit is not the absence/presence of conscious processes, but the absence/presence of attention to forms. In the initial definitions, incidental was also distinguished from intentional by its supposed lack of attention to form. However, we have shown that in fact, they both contain a level of awareness. So, in this sense there does seem to be a difference between implicit and incidental. However, further on, DeKeyser (2006: 329) states that with implicit learning as well, students remain aware of rules, the language form, by which implicit is again equated with incidental.

The question of what exactly distinguishes implicit/explicit from acquisition/learning and incidental/intentional remains obscure. The terms are used interchangeably and there is
no consensus among the different researchers, which unfortunately does not facilitate this survey.

2.5. Conclusion
The above-mentioned distinctions are important in SLA research in general, but also in my own research. As already said, I will deal with the vocabulary knowledge of primary school children. These have not yet received any formal instruction in English, yet it is familiar to them as they come across it in everyday life via popular culture. I will thus focus on the children’s acquired vocabulary knowledge, viz. the vocabulary they have arbitrarily picked up from hearing the language without paying specific attention to the language form. The words that will be tested have been randomly selected and they will not be made available to the participants beforehand, for instance by showing a video-fragment in which all of these words occur. I will thus not focus on their incidental knowledge, as, as has been discussed earlier, this form of knowledge requires a certain level of focus of attention on the language form, but exclusively on the participants’ acquired knowledge.

3. Factors influencing the language learner
Bot, Wander & Verspoor draw attention to the fact that language proficiency depends on various parameters.
‘there are enormous differences between learners. Second-language learners may have learned additional languages, may have started learning their second language at different ages, may be more or less motivated, may be more or less intelligent, and may have more or less aptitude’ (Bot, Wander & Verspoor 2005:65)

In this section, I will briefly discuss age, attitudes/motivation, language aptitude/intelligence and finally input/interaction.
3.1. Age

In a preliminary research I conducted (Dermul, 2008), one child answered the question “Would you already like to learn a foreign language?” with “Of course, the younger you start learning a language, the better!”. It is indeed a widely-held belief that younger L2 learners outperform older L2 learners.

The first ones to explain this viewpoint were the neuroscientists Penfield and Roberts (1959, as cited in Hyltenstam & Abrahamsson, 2006: 539) who claimed that the brain had a special and distinct flexible area for language learning. As long as the cerebral flexibility is present, mostly until the age of nine, direct learning from the input is possible. After this age limit, L2 learning has to develop via an indirect channel, viz. via the L1 knowledge, which is, in their opinion, responsible for the fact that youngsters are better at language learning than adults. Later on, Lenneberg developed this hypothesis further and in 1967 he formulated his Critical Period Hypothesis (CPH):

‘Automatic acquisition from mere exposure to a given language seems to disappear [after puberty], and foreign languages have to be taught and learned through a conscious and laboured effort. Foreign accents cannot be overcome easily after puberty. However, a person can learn to communicate [in a foreign language]at the age of forty. This does not trouble our basic hypothesis (1967: 176, as cited in Hyltenstam & Abrahamsson, 2006: 539).’

Lenneberg makes clear that it is not impossible to learn a foreign language after puberty (the terminus), but he does claim that one will never be able to reach nativelike attainment when learning begins after the critical period.

In order to defend this claim, proponents of the CPH also refer to first language acquisition, which is believed to have a critical period as well, viz. if language acquisition does not start before the age of 7, ultimate attainment in the mother tongue will never be achieved (Hyltenstam & Abrahamsson, 2006: 543). Hyltenstam & Abrahamsson (2006: 543) mention a study by Gleitman and Newport (1995), who compared the cases of Genie (who was isolated and deprived of language from age 1.5 till age 13), Chelsea (who had a hearing impairment but was erroneously diagnosed as mentally retarded and was consequently deprived of linguistic input until age 31) and Isabelle (who was isolated until the time she was 6). Focussing on Genie and Isabelle, who did not suffer from the extra difficulty of the hearing impairment Chelsea had, Gleitman and Newport saw that after one year of language exposure, Isabelle reached a ‘native-like fluency’ (p.11) while Genie attained a linguistic level comparable to that of a two-year-old. This study proved the importance of age in first language acquisition and concluded that after the age of 7, nativelike attainment is not possible. Despite the fact that the age of seven as an ultimate age to attain nativelike attainment is still much debated, it did enforce the idea that in SLA too, language learning had to start as early as possible and certainly before puberty.

However, studies of the influence of age in SLA were contradictory, some argued that younger children are better in L2 learning, others that older learners do better. An example of the latter can be found in Snow & Hoefnagel-Höhle (1978, as cited in Appel & Vermeer, 1994: 56) who concluded that the Dutch language competence of children whose mother tongue was English but who lived in the Netherlands was best among the 8-10 and 12-15 year-olds and worst among the 3-5 year-olds. These contradictory studies led Krashen, Long & Scarcella (1979: 573, as cited in Hyltenstam & Abrahamsson, 2006: 545) to conclude that:

1. ‘adults proceed through early stages of morphological and syntactic development faster than children (where time and exposure are constant).’
2. ‘older children acquire faster than younger children (again in early stages of morphology and syntax, where time and exposure are held constant.)’
3. ‘child starters outperform adult starters in the long run.’

Since then, research on the influence of age in SLA has focussed mainly on three questions: (1) What are the age effects on initial learning efficiency: who is faster in the short run? ; (2)
What are the age effects on eventual learning outcomes: who is better in the long run? (3)

What are the age effects on ultimate learning potentials: who can become nativelike in a second language? (Hylenstam & Abrahamsson, 2006: 546-555).

Age effects on initial learning efficiency: Researchers examining these questions have gathered their data both from natural and experimental L2 exposure. In the latter setting, subjects are taught some aspects of an unknown language and are then subjected to a test (Slavoff & Johnsonn, 1995: 3). Mostly, in this kind of experiment, older learners outperform the younger. The question however is whether this reflects reality or whether this is a mere consequence of the design of the experiment. Long (1990: 260) argues that older learners are already accustomed to this kind of testing design and hence perform better, so not because they intrinsically learn faster. Patkowski (1980: 75) states that this question about initial learning efficiency in itself is completely irrelevant, as it has nothing to do with ultimate attainment in the L2.

Age effects on eventual learning outcomes: This question, concerned with ultimate attainment, is much more important than the previous one. Research has shown that there is indeed a ‘significant correlation between AO [age of onset] and ultimate L2 outcomes, while other factors, such as length of residence (LOR) and degree of motivation, cannot account for the variation in ultimate attainment’ (Hylenstam & Abrahamsson, 2006: 547). Patkowski (1982, as cited in Appel & Vermeer, 1994: 55-56) found that immigrants who arrived in the US before puberty had better syntactic competencies than those who arrived after puberty. Oyama (1982, as cited in Appel & Vermeer, 1994: 56) came to the same conclusions regarding phonological competencies. Johnson and Newport (1989, as cited in Hylenstam & Abrahamsson, 2006: 547) finally looked at the grammatical intuitions of adult Chinese and Korean ESL learners and ‘the results showed that the youngest AO group (3-7) performed within the range of native controls; for subjects with AOs above 7 there was linear decline in performance up through puberty; from the age of 17 and upwards the linear decline in performance with increasing age vanished.’ This evidence seems to show that there is indeed a critical period for language learning and that the general claim ‘the sooner you start learning a language, the better’ should be maintained. The problem however, is that in all these studies, the informants were selected randomly, possibly not capturing the few adults who might have reached ultimate attainment in the L2. White and Genesee (1996, as cited in Hyltenstam & Abrahamsson, 2006: 549) acknowledge this problem and argue that ‘in order to investigate the absolute potentials of late learners, only subjects which seem to have reached nativelike L2 proficiency levels should be selected’.

What are the age effects on ultimate learning potentials: This question deals with whether language learners can achieve nativelike attainment. In line with the general conclusion that in most cases young L2 learners do better in the long run, we can assume that the young are more likely to reach not only an ultimate, but also a nativelike attainment, as opposed to the adult L2 learners.

Coppieters (1987) and Moyer (1999) (as cited in Hyltenstam & Abrahamsson, 2006: 551-552), respectively investigating the syntactic/semantic judgments and the pronunciation of successful, highly educated and highly motivated L2 learners, both found that there was a small, yet significant difference between L2 learners’ and native subjects’ performances. Bongaerts (1999) on the other hand ‘reports on the nativelike pronunciation of some highly proficient post-puberty Dutch foreign language students of English and French in the Netherlands’ and ‘results showed that significant proportions of these subjects passed as native speakers according to panels of native judges; in fact they performed in the upper range of native controls’. These apparently contradictory conclusions can, however, be easily explained, viz. in this case the difference in results is a consequence of the applied methodology. Bongaerts had his subjects read 10 sentences aloud whereas both Coppieters and Moyer, in addition to having their subjects read sentences aloud, also asked their subjects to engage in an interview, thus obtaining a more spontaneous stretch of language. Not surprisingly, it was in these free oral production tasks that the informants produced non-native structures and/or phonemes. It must be noted that the degree of ultimate attainment also depends on the specific linguistic domain, viz. the phonology of a second language has...
proven to be the most difficult domain to master for late language learners whereas it is believed that vocabulary and syntax generally do not pose problems (Scovel, 1988, as cited in Bot & al, 2005: 65)

Among the young starters too, nativelike level could not always be attained. Hyltenstam (1992, as cited in Hyltenstam & Abrahamsson, 2006: 553) focussed on the lexical and grammatical performance of 24 adolescent L2 speakers of Swedish, among whom 16 started to learn the language at the age of 6 or even earlier. Yet, only half of them attained nativelike attainment. This convinced Hyltenstam (1992: 364) to state that ‘the age 6 or 7 does seem to be an important period in distinguishing between near-native and nativelike ultimate attainment’ but that ‘an early AO may be a necessary although not sufficient requirement for nativelike ultimate attainment’. Other studies as well (Ekberg, 1998; Butler, 2000) proved that even very early starters can still be distinguished from native speakers.

In conclusion, there does seem to be a critical period for SLA, viz. younger language learners mostly have a greater possibility to reach proficiency in the L2. Nevertheless, there remain exceptions of adult learners achieving this same level. It is important to emphasize that this proficiency level usually does not approach a near-native or nativelike fluency. In fact, as Hyltenstam & Abrahamsson (2006: 555) state, there is only a ‘small population of L2 learners who, under exceptionally advantageous circumstances have potential of reaching high overall levels, perhaps even nativelike proficiency in one or several areas of the L2’. In sum, an early AO is important but on its own is not sufficient to attain nativelike fluency.

3.2. Attitudes and motivation

Attitudes and motivation are two separate characteristics which may influence SLA. Often, they are treated in the same chapter and used interchangeably, for example in Appel & Vermeer (1994), in Bot & al (2005) and in Ellis (1985, 1994). Larsen-Freeman & Long (1991) on the other hand treat them distinctly. I too shall endeavour to discuss both terms in the same chapter, as there seems to be a rather close relationship between them. Gardner (1979, as cited in Larsen-Freeman & Long, 1991: 175) even ‘claimed a linear relationship such that attitudes were said to affect motivation which in turn affected SLA.’

Attitudes towards language varieties are determined by the attitudes towards the speakers of that variety. Similarly, attitudes are believed to play an important role in SLA as they reflect the way people think about the target language community (Appel & Vermeer, 1994: 70). Ellis (1994: 198) states that

‘learners manifest different attitudes towards (1) the target language, (2) target language speakers, (3) the target-language culture, (4) the social value of learning the L2, (5) particular uses of the target language, and (6) themselves as members of their own culture’.

The attitude most frequently researched is the one towards the target language (Larsen-Freeman & Long 1991: 176). This will also be the case in my own research. However, Larsen-Freeman & Long (1991: 178) note that ‘there are other sources of and targets for attitudes which come into play when people are engaged in SLA’. For instance, the role of the parents in developing attitudes towards the target language, the influence of other peers, the learning situation, etc.

It is generally accepted that positive attitudes towards a second language will result in a better knowledge of that language (Bot & al, 2005: 72 ; Ellis, 1994: 198). However, this is not always the case. Larsen-Freeman & Long (1991: 176) refer to research done by Oller, Hudson & Liu (1977) and Oller, Baca & Vigil (1977), which compared the attitudes towards English with the scores on an English test of respectively Chinese-speaking foreign students and Mexican-American women living in the USA. The results differed quite remarkably: the Chinese students having positive attitudes towards English scored high on their test whereas the Mexican-American women with positive attitudes towards English did not. This study shows that having positive attitudes towards the L2 does not guarantee one’s proficiency in
that language. These results can possibly be explained by the fact that the Chinese students belonged to a high socioeconomic stratum and were willingly in the USA whereas the Mexican-American women belonged to a lower socioeconomic stratum and might feel a colonized minority and thus resent the Anglophone majority (Larsen-Freeman & Long, 1991: 176). This would also explain why part of the Mexican-American women, who had more negative attitudes towards English, were nevertheless successful in the test. Oller and Perkins (1978, as cited in Bot & al, 2005: 72; as cited in Ellis, 1994: 511) suggest that it is exactly the negative attitudes which make the learners motivated to excel in the L2, as if to prove that they are not the minority group the Anglophone community takes them for. ‘In this case negative feelings may lead to a desire to manipulate and overcome the people of the target language’ – a phenomenon referred to as Machiavellian Motivation.

So far, we have established that positive attitudes may, but do not necessarily, lead to heightened proficiency in the L2 and that negative attitudes do not hinder attainment of proficiency in the L2. Nevertheless, it is more likely that generally, negative attitudes will lead to poor scores on language tests. This was for example the case in a preliminary research about the receptive vocabulary knowledge of English among primary school students (Dermul, 2008: 54), where the children who had negative attitudes towards SLA and English in general and who did not wish to already learn English, all obtained poor scores on the English test. However, it is also possible that these children were aware of the fact that they do not understand English and that this caused their negative attitudes and motivation.

As already mentioned, there is believed to be a causal relationship between attitudes and motivation, viz. it is argued that positive attitudes increase motivation (Gardner, 1985, as cited in Bot & al, 2005: 72). Though, Appel & Vermeer (1994: 72) claim that it might also be possible that the relationship is the reverse, viz. that a good motivation, the ability to learn a language easily and very well, leads to positive attitudes. Most importantly, however, there is clearly interaction between the two.

There are two types of motivation: integrative motivation and instrumental motivation. This distinction was first proposed by Gardner and Lambert (1972, as cited in Bot & al 2005: 72). Bot, Wander & Verspoor (2005: 72) define integrative motivation as ‘[being] based on an interest in the second language and its culture and [referring] to the intention to become part of that culture’ whereas instrumental motivation is explained as ‘[being] based on a more practical need to communicate in the second language’. The former contains a high degree of aesthetic appeal; you like the language and its culture and you want to become part of it. The latter is largely based on practical matters, for instance, learning a language because it is important for your job. Integrative motivation is usually investigated by means of self-reporting ‘in which learners answer a set of questions about their attitudes towards the second language community, their interest in foreign languages and their desire to learn the second language’ (Bot & al, 2005: 72) and by means of test batteries, for instance the Attitude and Motivation Test Battery (AMTB) by Gardner (1985). Instrumental motivation has been tested, for example, by promising informants a reward if they would succeed in a language learning task, after which the difference in test results of the informants who were and who were not promised a reward can be examined. This methodology was applied by Gardner and Macintyre (1991, as cited in Bot & al, 2005: 72). However, one can also investigate instrumental motivation by self-reporting. There has been much discussion about which type of motivation is best for language acquisition in the long run. Larsen-Freeman & Long (1991: 173) state that

‘[a]ccording to Gardner and Lambert, an instrumentally orientated learner can be as intensively motivated as an integratively oriented one; however, they hypothesized that the latter orientation would be better in the long run for sustaining the drive necessary to master the L2’.

Gardner and Lambert’s conclusion (1972) is without a doubt a consequence of their recurrent studies of the acquisition of French by English-speaking Canadians, as Clement and Kruidenier (1983, as cited in Larsen-Freeman & Long, 1991: 174) have shown. They argued that the success of the integrative/instrumental motivation is intrinsically linked to contextual
factors, viz. that people studying the target language as a foreign language will be more apt to undertake this out of instrumental reasons whereas people (for instance English-speaking Canadians) studying the target language as a second language will also aspire to become part of the second language community, hence the success of integrative motivation. Other studies have also shown the success of instrumental motivation, for instance Lukmani (1972, as cited in Larsen-Freeman & Long, 1991: 174) found that the English proficiency of Indian students was better among those who were led by instrumental motivations.

So far, we have seen that good motivation and positive attitudes lead to a better proficiency in the L2. Some researchers however, have wondered why the success should be seen as the result of motivation and not as its cause. Strong (1984, as cited in Larsen-Freeman & Long, 1991: 174) for instance, found that the Spanish-speaking children’s motivation to learn English increased alongside their increasing proficiency in the language. Ellis (1994: 515) mentions a study of Savignon (1972) who saw that when students’ proficiency in French augmented, they become more enthusiastic towards learning the language, hence increasing their motivation. These studies encouraged Hermann (1980, as cited in Ellis 1994: 515) to advance the Resultative Hypothesis, ‘which claims that learners who do well are more likely to develop motivational intensity and to be active in the classroom’.

In recent years, in addition to integrative and instrumental motivation, other areas of motivation have been outlined by Dörnyei (2001, as cited in Bot & al, 2005: 74) : (1) social motivation; (2) motivation from a process-oriented perspective; (3) a neurobiological explanation of motivation and (4) task motivation. Bot & al (2005: 74) claim that ‘the new conceptualisation of motivation from a dynamic point of view seems particularly promising, as in the course of the acquisition process, the level of motivation will constantly change due to a wide range of interrelated factors’.

3.3. Aptitude and Intelligence

‘Regardless of all other factors like age and motivation, some people happen to be better at learning a second language than others’ (Bot & al, 2005: 69). Indeed, every person has disciplines in which he excels or in which he is weak, and language proficiency is one of these. Language learning aptitude can be defined as ‘[…] the inherent capability of second language learning’ (Bot & al, 2005: 69) and involves different skills. Caroll (1965, as cited in Ellis, 1994: 495-496), an American psychologist who dominated the field of aptitude-research, described four factors determining language aptitude:

1. Phonemic coding ability (the ability to code foreign sounds in a way that they can be remembered later). This ability is seen as related to the ability to spell and to handle sound-symbol relationships.
2. Grammatical sensitivity (the ability to recognize the grammatical functions of words in sentences).
3. Inductive language learning ability (the ability to identify patterns of correspondence and relationships involving form and meaning).
4. Rote learning ability (the ability to form and remember associations between stimuli). This ability is hypothesized to be involved in vocabulary learning.

The two most important tests assessing language aptitude are the Modern Language Aptitude Test (MLAT) (Carroll & Sapon, 1959) and the Pimsleur Language Aptitude Battery (PLAB) (Pimsleur, 1966), of which the latter was especially designed to be used by high school students (Ellis, 1994: 495). The two tests are similar and both have obtained clear correlations with proficiency scores in school-contexts (Bot & al, 2005: 70). They differ however, in that Pimsleur includes intelligence as being part of aptitude whereas Caroll believes that intelligence is independent of it (Bot & al, 2005: 70). Pimsleur also thinks that aptitude is intrinsically connected to motivation whereas Caroll believes it to be a ‘stable factor, perhaps even innate’ not linked to other factors such as motivation. This also explains his claim that aptitude cannot be altered through training (Ellis, 1994: 495). It is important to
note that Caroll distinguishes second language aptitude from achievement in the L2: a correlation between the two can only be established after L2 training has taken place (Ellis, 1994: 494-495). Hence, Ellis (1994: 495) concludes that:

‘Aptitude has to be viewed not as a prerequisite for L2 acquisition (as all learners, irrespective of their aptitude, may achieve a reasonable level of proficiency), but as a capacity that enhances the rate and ease of learning. Aptitude tests, therefore, provide a prediction of rate of learning.’

After Caroll, the study of aptitude unfortunately became a marginal activity and hardly any studies were carried out anymore. Two factors were responsible for this:

1. Aptitude research was viewed as ‘anti-egalitarian’ (Dörnyei & Skehan, 2006: 593) in that it was feared that it would discourage learners if they were to find out that they had a reduced language aptitude.

2. The MLAT and PLAB showed especially high correlations with controlled language learning and not with communicative skills and free oral productions (Bot & al, 2005: 70; Appel & Vermeer, 1994: 61; Ellis, 1994: 498). Dörnyei & Skehan, (2006: 594) state that especially Krashen (1981) ‘linked foreign language aptitude to learning, and to the sorts of activities which are teacher-led and occur exclusively in classrooms, that is, explicit rule-focus, non-communicative practice activities, and awareness of language items on the learner’s part’. Appel & Vermeer (1994: 61) argue that this is normal, as both the MLAT/PLAB and foreign language proficiency tests presented in formal classroom study basically assess the same competencies and tasks, and as such the MLAT/PLAB do not measure some innate linguistic ability.

However, from the late 1980s/early 1990s onwards, studying language aptitude has come in vogue again. In the first place, because the MLAT and PLAB simply are good predictors of L2 achievement in a classroom-context. Dörnyei & Skehan (2006: 589) claim that ‘[…] foreign language aptitude and motivation have generated the most consistent predictors of second language learning success’. Secondly, because it was proved that aptitude also functions as a suitable predictor of L2 achievement in contexts where the L2 is spontaneously acquired. For instance, DeKeyser (2000, as cited in Dörnyei & Skehan, 2006: 595) showed that the aptitude test scores of Hungarian immigrants learning English in Pittsburgh correlated with their free oral production and communicative skills. Skehan (1989) as well as Reves (1983) (as cited in Dörnyei & Skehan, 2006: 595) concluded that aptitude ‘functions as an effective predictor’ both in foreign language contexts, characterised by formal input, and second language contexts, which consists of naturalistic language use which must be acquired.

Several researchers assume a relationship between intelligence and aptitude. As already mentioned, Pismleur acknowledges this relationship whereas Caroll argues that the two are distinct entities. The latter defends his claim by referring to research conducted by Lambert & Gardner in which intelligence and language aptitude did not appear to correlate with one another (Ellis, 1994: 495). Skehan (1990, as cited in Ellis, 1994: 495) too sees differences between the two concepts. Bot & al (2005: 70) note that ‘the question whether aptitude should include intelligence cannot be answered straightforwardly. After all, this depends on the definition of intelligence.’ Since Spearman (1904), there is a debate whether intelligence constitutes one dominant factor, viz. general intelligence or the ‘g-factor’, or whether intelligence is composed of different unconnected mental abilities. Today, the latter view is believed to be the correct one. For instance, Sternberg (2002, as cited in Bot & al, 2005: 71) proposes to distinguish between (1) analytical intelligence, (2) creative intelligence and (3) practical intelligence. Gardner (1983, 1999, as cited in Bot & al, 2005: 71) on the other hand introduced the concept of multiple intelligences (MI theory) and defines seven types of intelligences:

1. Linguistic intelligence - involving sensitivity to spoken and written language, the capacity to use language effectively.
2. Logical-mathematical - the capacity to analyze problems logically and to perform mathematical operations.
4. Bodily-kinesthetic ability to use one’s body to solve problems.
5. Spatial – the ability to recognize and use the patterns of space.
6. Interpersonal - the capacity to understand the intentions, motivations and desires of other people.
7. Intrapersonal - the capacity to understand oneself.

A specific study about the nature of intelligence versus aptitude has been carried out by Teepen (2004: 1-9). He makes clear that a normal IQ assessment contains tests of spatial understanding, memory, pattern recognition and linguistic knowledge of various sorts and that the final IQ score is calculated on the basis of the scores on the various subsections. This implies that two people having an IQ score of 100 could have a very different intellectual profile (Teepen 2004: 4). The first person could obtain the score of 100 because of his good performance in spatial understanding, whereas the second one could obtain his high score thanks to his linguistic knowledge (Teepen 2004: 4). This seems to favour the hypothesis that intelligence is indeed independent of aptitude. However, Teepen (2004: 4) refers to a study by Obler (1989), who studied CJ, a person with an exceptional ability to learn languages. Despite the fact that CJ obtained a rather low score on visual-spatial tasks, his final score remained high and his linguistic abilities were confirmed in the IQ test (Teepen 2004: 5). Only focussing on CJ's high intellectual score and high language scores, Teepen (2004: 5) concluded that there was a direct relationship between aptitude and intelligence and he stated that

‘the contention that aptitude and intelligence are independent entities is therefore demonstrably invalid. [...] The term aptitude should be considered synonymous with intelligence, and it appears that there is no reason to retain the category of aptitude’.

He thus concludes that aptitude and intelligence are so interdependent that the one cannot be differentiated from the other. Therefore, only the notion of intelligence should be maintained (Teepen 2004: 5). But, in my opinion, this conclusion does not refute the hypothesis that intelligence and aptitude are two different entities. On the contrary, Teepen (2004: 5) confirms that the link between having a high IQ and good language skills is not direct, nor necessary. A person with an exceptional ability for visual-spatial tasks and not at all for languages, would also have obtained a high final score. Therefore, I prefer to maintain both notions of language aptitude and intelligence.

In addition to intelligence, aptitude has also been linked to other factors. As already mentioned, Pimsleur (1966) thinks that aptitude is intrinsically connected to motivation. Wesche (1981, as cited in Ellis 1994: 496) too claims that aptitude is only effective if second language learning motivation is present. Ellis (1994: 498) also remarks that there is a strong link between language aptitude and L1 acquisition. Other researchers have investigated the relationship between aptitude and age. DeKeyser (2000, as cited in Dörnyei & Skehan, 2006: 601) studied Hungarian immigrants who were learning English in Pittsburgh and discovered that ‘(1) there is no correlation between aptitude scores and attained proficiency up till the age of 17; (2) there is a correlation between aptitude and attained proficiency after this age; (3) the few subjects who arrived in the US after the age of 17 but who have reached nativelike levels of English are all high aptitude scorers.’ Harley & Hart (1997, as cited in Dörnyei & Skehan, 2006: 596) looked at the relationship between different aptitude components and age and found that (1) there are especially strong correlations between younger children and the memory components of aptitude, whereas (2) older learners were correlated to the language analysis component of aptitude.

3.4. Input and Interaction
A crucial aspect in second language acquisition is input. Though its importance was challenged by some approaches, such as the Universal Grammar approach in which ‘input was relegated to a secondary role, interacting with innate structure to effect acquisition’ (Gass, 2006: 229), it is highly influential in behaviourist and interactionist theories. It is important to note that input and interaction designate two different kinds of input, the former one implies that you only process the language, the latter one that you also communicate in the target language. However, often no distinction is made between the two. Klein (2003: 43-47) distinguishes them and Ellis (1994: 26) too acknowledges their different nature:

'It is self-evident that L2 acquisition can only take place when the learner has access to input in the L2. This input may come in written or spoken form. In the case of spoken input, it may occur in the context of interaction (i.e. the learner’s attempts to converse with a native speaker, a teacher, or another learner) or in the context of non-reciprocal discourse (for example, listening to the radio or watching a film).'

However, he does not maintain this distinction throughout his discussion. For instance, he treats Krashen (1985) and Long (1981a) in the same line, whereas the former studies input in its strict sense and the latter looks at interactionally modified input. In a preliminary research about 10 – 11 year-olds’ receptive English vocabulary knowledge (Dermul, 2008), I did not discuss ‘interaction’, as I assumed children only got into contact with English via television and the Internet. Although this was generally the case, two participants mentioned that they had already had direct contact (interactional contact) with English, particularly in holiday-settings. It is therefore useful to provide a discussion of both input and interaction.

3.4.1. Input

Firstly, it is important to distinguish input from intake. Input is all the linguistic information that you read, hear and process whereas intake is only the linguistic information that we take in, viz. ‘which we pay attention to and notice’ (Bot & al, 2005: 8), so not all input is intake. Appel & Vermeer (1994: 123) argue that only input of which the contents are interesting or stimulating will be taken in, hence contributing to L2 acquisition. Therefore it is assumed that intake is especially present in formal, instructional settings, which normally have an awareness-raising effect.

Most research on input is preoccupied with the notion of comprehensible input, which is by some researchers believed to be ‘the major causative factor in L2 acquisition’ (Ellis, 1994: 273). This was for instance addressed in Krashen’s (1985) Input Hypothesis. The idea is that learners can only learn from input if they understand it, and in order to achieve this, language must be comprehensible. For Krashen (1985, as cited in Ellis, 1999: 5) input could be made comprehensible by (1) interaction, (2) by using contextual information and (3) by premodified input, viz. a more simple version of a certain language hence making it easier to understand. Ellis (1999: 6) states that premodified input substantially facilitates comprehension but that it has not yet been proven that it also facilitates acquisition, which is after all the ultimate purpose. In Belgium, children do not seem to have access to this kind of premodified input. Kooyman (2000: 127) for instance, claims that the single source in Flanders which offers children English input is television and nearly all these English-spoken television programmes do not adapt their language to render it more accessible for a foreign audience. There is thus indeed no access to premodified input. However, there is access to comprehensible input. In my opinion, it is possible to see the medium of television as a way which renders L2 more comprehensible, as the foreign language is present together with the contextual information (the visual aspects of television programme) and the L1 (in the form of subtitles).

This is confirmed by Klein (2003: 44) for whom input is the sum of linguistic and contextual information, i.e. hearing the words and seeing the context in which the words are uttered. For Klein, context refers to the extra-linguistic environment, such as the setting, the participants and non-verbal communication.

1. The linguistic information consists of four properties which can help you decode the message (Klein 2003: 66-71), viz. frequency, the position in the utterance, intonation
and correspondence to parallel information. Firstly, words that occur frequently are better retained than non-frequent words. Secondly, words immediately preceding or following a pause, get more attention and are consequently better remembered. Thirdly, stressed words are more easily acquired, once again, because they get more attention. Finally, words which can easily be associated with a specific situation are learned more rapidly. For example, liberty, an abstract word without a specific situational context will be learned less easily than tomato, a concrete word, of which the referent can be designated.

2. The contextual information comprises knowledge of the world, situational knowledge and knowledge of the preceding information (Klein 2003:113-117). These three contextual components can all be found in television programmes. If, for example, a person watches a particular episode of an American sitcom, such as Friends, s/he needs to know the concept of Thanksgiving, an annual holiday typical of the USA (knowledge of the world), see the setting in which the action happens (situational knowledge) and s/he can understand everything through the preceding words (knowledge of preceding information).

As already suggested, English-spoken television programmes function to Belgians as a form of premodified input as both the linguistic information (the foreign language speech sounds and the accompanying subtitles in the native language) and the contextual information (the setting, non-verbal communication, etc.) are simultaneously present. All this suggests that watching English-spoken programmes may have a beneficial effect on spontaneous ESL acquisition. This hypothesis has indeed been proven correct by some researchers, who focussed especially on the influence of subtitles on SLA. Van de Poel and d’Ydewalle (1999) studied incidental foreign language acquisition by children watching subtitled television programmes. They posited that:

‘To allow for foreign-language acquisition, at least the channel in which the foreign language is presented should be processed. The presence of the native language should facilitate the foreign-language acquisition. Additionally, the pictorial information may also support the processing of the two available languages.’ (Van de Poel and d’Ydewalle, 1999: 228).

Results showed that the children indeed learned a substantial size of words, particularly nouns. However, watching subtitled foreign television programmes did not seem to have an effect on syntactic, morphological and grammatical proficiency (Van de Poel and d’Ydewalle, 1999: 240-241). Pavakun and D’Ydewalle (1991: 198) noticed that children who have not yet had any formal instruction of the foreign language in question, nevertheless acquire a considerable proficiency in the foreign language, just from watching television. However, stating that their studies ‘convincingly show that watching less than a quarter of an hour of a subtitled television programme facilitates considerably the acquisition of a foreign vocabulary’ sounds exaggerated and not very credible. After all, we should bear in mind that these researchers investigated incidental vocabulary learning, which probably caused the participants to be more attentive to the language form. Despite the fact that these studies do not reflect the vocabulary acquisition in completely natural settings, it does suggest that one will probably benefit from watching subtitled television programmes. Consequently, I have also asked my participants about their television habits.

3.4.2. Interaction

Research concerning interaction primarily draws on the Interaction Hypothesis (IH). Ellis (1999: 3-4) defines the IH as following:

‘The IH concerns itself with one particular kind of interaction – that which has become known as the negotiation of meaning. This concerns the conversational exchanges that arise when interlocutors seek to prevent a communicative impasse occurring or to remedy an actual impasse that has arisen. These exchanges involve what Long (1980) has called interactional modifications (i.e. changes to the structure of a conversation to accommodate potential or actual problems of understanding.)’
An example of such interactional modifications can be found in Varonis & Gass (1985: 74):

Student 1: And what is your mmm father’s job?
Student 2: My father is now retire.
Student 1: Retired?
Student 2: Yes
Student 1: Oh, yes

Long (1996: 451-452) states that negotiation of meaning is particularly present in NS-NNS conversations, which, according to him, forms the evidence that this kind of interaction facilitates language comprehension, and hence language acquisition. Gass (2006: 233-234) points out that the negotiation of meaning is usually triggered by native speakers, who advance confirmation checks, comprehension checks, clarification checks, reformulations, elaborated questions and recasts, i.e. turning the ungrammatical NNS sentence into a grammatical one. In the example above for example, student 1 (the NS) proposes a recast, he replaces the ungrammatical form, i.e. the infinitive by a grammatical form, i.e. the inflected verb. In Long’s opinion, this enables student 2 (the NNS) to see his error and to remember that the past tense of ‘to retire’ is ‘retired’ and that the past tense should be used in such a context.

Long’s IH (1980) was subject to several criticisms. Ellis (1999: 5-7) elaborates on three of them. First, Long’s claim that comprehension automatically leads to acquisition was challenged. Faerch and Kasper (1986, as cited in Ellis, 1999: 6) point out that in order to achieve acquisition, comprehension is necessary but not sufficient. The linguistic forms must be processed and more importantly be retained, and it is this latter point which has not yet been proven. Second, there is no solid proof either that specifically interactionally obtained input (as opposed to premodified input) is beneficial for acquisition. Pica, Young & Doughty (1987, as cited in Ellis, 1994: 276) compared the effect of three types of input (unmodified input, premodified input, interactionally modified input) on 16 low-intermediate ESL learners’ oral comprehension ability. They concluded that the interactionally modified input had the best results, but it was also pointed out that it contained several repetitions and rephrasings and as such a considerably greater amount of input. Therefore, Ellis (1994: 276) argues that ‘it is not clear, whether the advantage found for the interactionally modified input arises from greater quantity of input or better quality’. Moreover, other studies (Loschky, 1994, as cited in Gass, 2006: 238) have shown that negotiation of meaning did not have any effect on retention, a crucial part in language learning. Third, one may doubt whether negotiation of meaning really results in comprehension, as it is possible that the NNS only repeats or ‘mimics’ (Gass, 2006: 236) the utterances of the NS. For instance, in the following example (from Mackey, Gass & McDonough, 2000, as cited in Gass, 2006: 236) it is not at all clear whether comprehension has taken place:

| NNS:  | There’s a basen of flowers on the bookshelf |
| NNS:  | a basin? |
| NNS:  | base |
| NS:   | a base? |
| NNS:  | a base |
| NS:   | oh, a vase |
| NNS:  | vase |

Interaction also involves output on the part of the NNS. Therefore, research concerned with the IH has also shown an interest in the ‘modified output that learners produce as a result of meaning negotiation and recasts’ (Ellis, 1999: 11). Especially Swain (1985, 1995) has focussed on this subject as she claims (1995: 128) that ‘output may stimulate learners to move from the semantic, open-ended, nondeterministic, strategic processing prevalent in comprehension to the complete grammatical processing needed for accurate production’. It is important to note that this output must be pushed, i.e. learners must systematically be corrected and constantly pushed towards using correct forms (Ellis, 1994: 283). The idea is that this kind of language production requires a more focussed
attention on the language form, which is believed to enhance learners’ control over and hence knowledge of the L2 (Swain, 1995; De Bot, 1996, as cited in Ellis 1999: 12). However, there is again little hard evidence to support this output hypothesis.

3.4.3. Foreigner Talk and Interlanguage Talk

A preliminary research (Dermul, 2008) about the receptive vocabulary knowledge of English among children in primary school, showed that most ten or eleven-year-old children have contact with English via the medium of television, computer (games) and songs, consequently only getting input. However, there are also some who have already had direct contact with English and have interacted in English, particularly when travelling abroad and English serves as the means of communication. In these cases, it was probably not a grammatically correct British nor American English that was spoken, but rather foreigner and/or interlanguage talk. These are two language varieties which are formally adapted - simplified- so as to be better understood by non-native speakers of English or English language learners. Hence Ellis (1994: 246) labels them as being part of ‘a special kind of register that is used when speakers address language learners’.

Foreigner talk (FT) is ‘the modified speech when native speakers talk to L2 learners’ (Ellis, 1994: 247). For instance, when a family goes abroad for the summer holidays and stays in a hotel, there is a good possibility that child-entertainment-activities will be provided. When one of the entertainers is British or American, they will use a simplified variety of English, so FT, to address the children. Other situations in which FT is used is when addressing immigrants, when giving direction to tourists, etc. The speech modifications to arrive at FT may result in ungrammatical (rather marked) as well as in grammatical sentences. Some examples of the ungrammatical adaptations are (Ferguson, 1975; Ferguson and Debose, 1977 in Ellis, 1994: 252):

1. Omission of grammatical functors such as copula, articles, conjunctions, subject pronouns, and inflectional morphology;
2. Expansion, as when ‘you’ is inserted before an imperative verb (for example, ‘you give me money’);
3. Replacement/rearrangement, as when post-verbal negation is replaced by pre-verbal negation in English FT (for example, ‘No want play’).

Long (1983a in Ellis, 1994: 253) mentions four factors which trigger instances of ungrammatical FT:

1. The learner’s level of proficiency in L2 – ungrammatical FT is more likely when the learner’s proficiency is low.
2. The status of the native speaker – ungrammatical FT is more likely when the native speaker is or thinks he or she is of higher status.
3. The native speaker has prior experience of using FT but only of the ‘limited kind’ used to address non-native speakers of low proficiency.
4. The extent to which the conversation is spontaneous – ungrammatical FT is less likely in planned, formal discourse or in experimental situations.

Factor two has as effect that the use of FT by native speakers is often not well received by language learners, who interpret FT as a sign of lack of respect. Meisel (1980, as cited in Ellis, 1994: 254) discovered that Italian and Spanish guest workers in Germany equated the use of FT with contempt on the part of the native Germans. This has even led some linguists to define FT no longer as the language used by a native speaker to talk to a language learner but instead as a ‘deliberate simplification of their language when speaking to foreigners or their notions of how foreigners speak their language, especially foreigners considered to be culturally or racially inferior’ (Lipski, 2005: 1). He thus believes that today, FT is especially used to mock ‘others’ who are considered inferior and this by stressing the most noteworthy phonetic traits and by rendering the sentences even more ungrammatical, in such a way that it no longer resembles true FL, in its original sense (Lipski, 2005: 3).
Next to ungrammatical FT, there is grammatical FT, the characteristics of which are (1) simplification, (2) regularization and (3) elaboration. Table 2 (Ellis, 1994: 255), provided below, illustrates these three processes:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of speech</th>
<th>Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Baseline (i.e. speech Addressed to native Speakers)</td>
<td>the 747 is a large-sized jet manufactured by Boeing, an American company, with a seating capacity of over 500, arranged on two decks.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Simplified FT</td>
<td>Well, er, … the 747’s a big jet. And er…er… it’s a Boeing, an American plane. Er… there’s over 500 seats with er… some on Top and er… some down below</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regularized FT</td>
<td>the 747, it is a big jet. It is made by Boeing which is an American company. The seats, they are on two levels. There is a top level and a bottom level.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elaborated FT</td>
<td>The Boeing 747 or jumbo, as it is called, is a very large jet Manufactured or made by an American company, a firm in Seattle USA. It has the capacity or space to seat a large number of passengers, over 500 people. The seats are on two decks or levels, some up on top and some down below.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2: Grammatical Foreigner Talk (Ellis, 1994: 255)

As can be seen, simplified FT is characterised by quite some hesitations/pauses, which have the advantage of giving the interlocutor the time to process the information flow. Moreover, more accessible language forms are used, for instance, large-sized jet becomes big jet, seating capacity of over 500 becomes there’s over 500 seats. Also highly recurrent is the contracted form of is (747’s; it’s; there’s). Regularized FT too largely maintains the more accessible language forms (big jet, seats, level) but displays a preference for full verbs forms instead of contracted verbs forms (it is; they are; there is) and no longer slows down the information-processing by pauses or hesitations. Finally, elaborated FT shows none of the lexical and/or grammatical simplification which characterised simplified and regularized FT. At first sight, one would even be reluctant to label this last process FT, due to the long and rather detailed sentences and the more specific vocabulary. The recurrent use of synonyms (Boeing 747 or jumbo; manufactured or made; American company or firm in Seattle USA; capacity or space to seat; decks or levels) contributes to this overall ‘non-FT-sense’. Yet, all these mechanisms have the effect of rendering the meaning as clear as possible. Hence it does belong to FT.

It needs to be noted that there is also a difference between FT addressed to adult language learners and FT addressed to child language learners, the latter displaying even more simplification of the language structure (Ellis, 1994: 451).

More recent studies of foreigner talk concentrate on the interactional modifications that are made to ensure a good communication with the non-native language user, the types of which can be seen in figure 2 (Ellis, 1994: 257-258). Though interesting, I will not elaborate on this issue.
Interlanguage talk (ILT), the other language variety which is formally adapted - simplified- so as to be better understood by non-native speakers of English or English language learners, ‘consists of the language that learners receive as input when addressed by other learners’ (Ellis, 1994: 265). So, if we return to the holiday setting, ILT can be the variant which is used between a Dutch child and a Turkish children’s animator communicating in English or the variant between a Dutch and German child trying to communicate in English. None are native English speakers but they already know the language a little bit. When they communicate with each other, this makes them users of ILT. The fact that no native speaker is present in the communication setting, explains why ILT is less grammatical than FT (Porter, 1986 as cited in Ellis, 1994: 266). On the other hand it seems that ILT is characterised to a larger extent by meaning negotiation, which is of extreme importance in the interactionist theories which view meaning negotiation as a major incentive of language acquisition (Gass and Varonis, 1985a; Porter, 1986 as cited in Ellis, 1994: 266).

4. Testing vocabulary

In the past, grammar was seen as the most important domain in second language learning. In the last two decades however, researchers have again started to concentrate on the study of vocabulary, recognizing its importance for fluent language use (vocabulary size: 8)². Anderson and Freebody (1981, as cited in vocabulary size: 14) noticed a high correlation between reading comprehension tests in the L1 and vocabulary tests, viz. those informants with small vocabulary sizes proved to have more difficulties with the reading comprehension exercises. Laufer (1989, 1992, as cited in vocabulary size: 9) found that this correlation also exists in SLA and stated that ‘learners whose target vocabulary is not large enough to have 95% coverage do not reach an adequate level of comprehension of the texts and are unable to transfer their readings skills from their L1 to their L2’. Some years later, Ellis (1997) demonstrated that lexical knowledge plays a main role in acquiring grammar (vocabulary size: 9). Nation (1999: 33) concluded that

‘vocabulary learning is considered both by first language and second language researchers to be of great significance in language competence (Grabe, 1991; Unlabeled Table 33)

² Vocabulary Size is a pdf-document of which the author is unknown.
Frederiksen, 1982) and that vocabulary testing is now receiving the attention it deserves, with studies of the construct validity of some vocabulary tests (Chapelle, 1994; Perkins and Linville, 1987). He proves this by referring to the Vocabulary Levels Test and to the Eurocentres Vocabulary Size Test. These tests will be discussed later on in detail.

In the first section, I shall look at some important distinctions generally made in vocabulary studies. More concretely, the difference between breadth and depth in vocabulary knowledge, between receptive and productive knowledge and finally the distinction between general and specific lexicon. In the second section, I shall discuss two important receptive vocabulary tests. Specifically the Vocabulary Levels Test (Nation, 1983) and the Yes/No test (Meara & Buxton, 1987). In the third section, I shall focus on the importance of high frequency words in L2 learning.

3.1. Distinctions in vocabulary knowledge

3.1.1. Breadth versus depth in vocabulary knowledge

A frequently made distinction in vocabulary testing is the one between vocabulary breadth and depth. Breadth refers to the quantitative aspect of a person’s vocabulary, to its size, i.e. the number of words of which the learner knows the main definition. Depth on the other hand refers to the qualitative aspect of a learner’s vocabulary. ‘Vocabulary depth tests measure how well a person knows the words, including synonymy, polysemy and collocations of the words’ (Zimmerman 2004: 4).

Zimmerman (2004: 16) remarks that ‘students may seem to know a word presented on a vocabulary breadth test yet be unable to understand or use its various inflections and derivations, or to use the word in particular contexts’. He gives the example of the word ‘obey’. He (2004: 16) says that people may be able to produce the verb conjugation, but not the derivations obedience, obedient, obediently and disobey. This suggests that, in contrast to depth-tests, breadth-tests serve no purpose. However, Read (2000, cited in Zimmerman 2004: 16) remarks that ‘while size tests may seem superficial, they can give a more representative picture of the overall state of the learner’s vocabulary than an in-depth probe of a limited number of words’. Meara too (1996: 37) supports breadth-analyses. He states that:

‘all other things being equal, learners with big vocabularies are more proficient in a wide range of language skills than learners with smaller vocabularies, and there is some evidence to support the view that vocabulary skills make a significant contribution to almost all aspects of L2 proficiency.’


An example of a depth test is the Word Associates Test (Read, 1993). The following example is taken from Tom Cobb’s website (http://www.lextutor.ca/), which contains the computerised version of the Word Associates Test (Read, 1998).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>sudden</th>
<th>beautiful</th>
<th>surprising</th>
<th>quick</th>
<th>thirsty</th>
<th>change</th>
<th>doctor</th>
<th>noise</th>
<th>school</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

The words in the left column are possible characteristics of sudden and may thus help deduce the meaning. The words in the right column are words with which sudden collocates or with which it occurs regularly in phrases or sentences (Read, 1998). Subsequently, the participant must indicate the four words which he/she thinks can be related to sudden. Here, this will be surprising, quick, change and noise. In this specific case there is a precise repartition of the two words over the two columns. However, this is not always the case.

Other examples of depth tests are the Euralex French Test and the test designed by Neven (both cited in Hommersom, 2003: 4-5).
3.1.1.2. Productive Vocabulary Levels Test (PVLT) (Laufer and Nation, 1999)

Commonly used breadth tests are the Eurocentres Vocabulary Size Test (Meara and Jones, 1990), the Vocabulary Levels Test (VLT) (Nation, 1983) and its productive counterpart, the Productive Vocabulary Levels Test (PVLT) (Laufer and Nation, 1999). Here, I shall only elaborate on the example of the PVLT, as the other two will be more elaborately discussed in 4.2.

‘The PVLT samples 18 items at each of the 2000, 3000, 5000, University Word List (UWL) and 10000 word levels’ (Laufer and Nation 1999:37). Each level contains the appropriate number of frequent words; the 2,000 level contains the 2,000 most frequent English words, the 3,000 level the 3,000 most frequent words etc. The 2,000 word level allows you to read simplified material; the 3,000 word level enables you to start with unsimplified texts; from the 5,000 word level onwards you have a substantial vocabulary knowledge; if you are acquainted with the university word level (UWL), you are an advanced learner of English; and finally if you reach the 10,000 word level you have attained near-native proficiency in English. The PVLT displays 18 sentences. In each sentence, one word is always only partially visible. The participant must fill in the appropriate word. Only the first letters are maintained. Ambiguity as to the word needed is impossible as Nation and Laufer (1999: 37) add an additional letter if, for example, two initial letters could give rise to different words.

Here follows an example of the PVLT in the 2,000-word level (Nation & Laufer 1999:46).

1. I’m glad we had this opp____ to talk.
2. There are a doz____ eggs in the basket.
3. Every working person must pay income t____.
4. The pirates buried the trea____ on a desert island.

The answer would be
1. I’m glad we had this opportunity to talk.
2. There are a dozen eggs in the basket.
3. Every working person must pay income tax.
4. The pirates buried the treasure on a desert island.

3.1.2. Receptive versus productive vocabulary knowledge

A second important distinction in measuring vocabulary knowledge, is the difference between receptive and productive vocabularies. Nation (1999: 366) claims that ‘receptive knowledge is that used in listening and reading, and involves going from the form of a word to its meaning, for example

*Translate the underlined word into your first language. He is a bold writer.*

Productive knowledge, says Nation (1999: 366) is ‘that used in speaking and writing, and involves going from the meaning to the form, for example

*Translate this word into English. Biji.*

Nation here gives the example of a translation test. However, it should be noted that participants may know the meaning of a word and yet be unable to translate it. So in my opinion, it would be better if the participants were also allowed to give a synonym or to describe the word, if they are unable to provide a translation.

An important productive test is the Productive Vocabulary Test (Laufer and Nation, 1999). Important receptive tests are the Vocabulary Levels Test (Laufer and Nation, 1995) and the Yes/No test (Meara and Buxton, 1987).

In the Vocabulary Levels Test (Nation, 1983; Laufer and Nation, 1995), each of the five levels contains six tasks. Every task consists of six words and three definitions/paraphrases of three of the six words. The participants must choose the right word to go with each
meaning. In total, each test thus assesses ninety words. An example can be found in Nation (1983: 19):

This is a vocabulary test. You must choose the right word to go with each meaning. Write the number of that word next to its meaning.

1. business
2. clock
3. horse _____ part of a house
4. pencil _____ animal with four legs
5. shoe _____ something used for writing
6. wall

You answer in the following way

1. business
2. clock
3. horse _____6__ part of a house
4. pencil _____3__ animal with four legs
5. shoe _____4__ something used for writing
6. wall

The Yes/No test (Meara and Buxton, 1987) presents the participants with a sample of words in the target language. One third of the words are pseudowords, i.e. words that do not exist. An example of the test can be found in Hommersom (2003: 7):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Word</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gathering</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forgivity</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whistle</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Draven</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crope</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tropical</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This last test is the one I have used to conduct my research. However, I did alter some aspects, which I shall elaborate on in chapter 3.

Within productive abilities, Laufer (Laufer, 1998; Laufer & Nation, 1999) distinguishes free productive ability from controlled productive ability. Laufer and Nation (1999: 36) claim that there are different degrees in knowing a word productively. They found that students may know and produce an infrequent word when they are specifically asked for it, but that they will not use the word spontaneously in writing or speaking activities. From that point of view, free productive ability refers to ‘the ability to use a word at one's free will’ and controlled productive ability to ‘the ability to use a word when compelled to do so by a teacher or researcher’ (Laufer & Nation, 1999: 37). Indeed, when talking spontaneously people want to transfer their message as clearly and quickly as possible. Therefore, the words which are most familiar and easiest to be understood, viz. the frequent words, will be used most frequently.

A widely accepted assumption is that a person's receptive vocabulary knowledge is larger than his/her productive knowledge. Laufer (1998: 255) found that the passive vocabulary size was larger than the productive one and that having an extended receptive knowledge led to a higher productive competence. Another finding was that the passive vocabulary size developed much more rapidly than the active one. She thus concluded that receptive vocabulary knowledge normally exceeds productive vocabulary knowledge (Laufer, 1998: 267).
3.1.3. General versus specific vocabulary knowledge

Hommersom (2003: 8) also makes a distinction between general and specific vocabulary knowledge. General word knowledge refers to the number of words known whereas specific word knowledge refers to the number of words known in a specific domain. She illustrates the specific vocabulary knowledge by giving the example of persons taking a course in *business French*. A test taken from these persons, will only examine the specific vocabulary i.e. the words frequently used in *business French* (Hommersom, 2003: 8).

3.2. Some receptive vocabulary tests

As this research studies the participants’ receptive vocabulary knowledge, we shall now look in detail at two important receptive vocabulary tests.

3.2.1. Vocabulary Levels Test (Nation 1983)

Nation’s test (Nation, 1983: 14-16) consists of five sections, each having its own frequency level. As already mentioned, you have the 2000, 3000, 5000, University Word Level (UWL) and 10000 word level. Each section consists of a number of questions. A question displays six words and three definitions. The aim is to link the words to the right definition. Here follows an example of the Vocabulary Levels Test of the 3,000 level (Nation, 1983: 21). For the whole test, see appendix 1.

1. administration
2. angel
3. frost
4. herd
5. mate
6. pond

The answer would be

1. administration
2. angel
3. frost
4. herd
5. mate
6. pond

The answer would be

1. administration
2. angel
3. frost
4. herd
5. mate
6. pond

Correcting the test is quite easy: you just give one point for each correct match of a word with its definition. If a person scores 12 out of 18 or even less in a section, this means that he/she does not yet manage the vocabulary within that level.

It is worthwhile noting that testing the first 1,000 words of English causes quite some problems (Nation, 1993: 194). First of all, there is a great possibility that the learners have poor reading skills. Consequently, they will not be able to understand the definitions. This led to the ‘True, Not true, Do not understand’ format. Guessing the correct answer was largely avoided by testing every word twice. A second problem is the sentence in which the word is presented. The words in the sentence should not cause difficulties themselves. As a solution, it was guaranteed that the other words in the sentence were of a higher frequency than the word sought. If this was not possible, a picture was used instead. A third difficulty is the fact that the first 1,000 English words (the high frequency words) frequently have different meanings. A final problem is the true-false format. This is based on common knowledge, which may vary from person to person. No solution could be found for these last two problems.

Here follows an example of the Vocabulary Levels Test, for the 1,000 word level (Nation, 1993: 200). For the whole test, see appendix 2.
Write T if a sentence is true. Write N if it is not true. Write X if you do not understand the sentence:

When something falls, it goes up  
This can keep people away from your house  
(this is followed by an arrow which points to the picture of a dog)

### 3.2.2. The Yes/No test (Meara & Buxton)

In 1987, Meara and Buxton designed the Yes/No test (Meara & Buxton, 1987). Hommersom (2003: 11) correctly remarks that this test was not invented by Meara and Buxton, but they were the first to apply the test to second language learners. The test presents the participants with sixty words in the target language and the participant has to indicate which words he knows and which he does not. Two thirds of the words are real, existing ones. The remaining one third are pseudowords, which are defined by Hommersom (2003: 11) as ‘words that obey the phonotactic rules of the target language, but which do not carry any significance’. An example of the test can be found in Hommersom (2003: 7) (or see 3.2.1.)

In 1992, Meara designed the English as a Foreign Language Vocabulary Test (Meara, 1992). This almost has the same design as the Yes/No test, but it is divided over six different levels, based on word frequency (Hommersom 2003: 14). Some examples of the non-words used in the level 1 test are lannery, cantilee, mundy and retrogradient (examples taken from Tom Cobb’s website, http://www.lexutor.com, a website displaying an example of the computerised version of the test, containing all frequency levels). A computerised version of the Yes/No test was designed by Meara and Jones (1988; 1990) and was called the Eurocentres Vocabulary Size Test.

The advantages of the Yes/No format are numerous. Firstly, designing the test is rather easy. Secondly, filling it in is not very time consuming which allows you to test a large number of lexical items. Thirdly, it represents the participant’s actual vocabulary size more accurately (Hommersom, 2003: 11-12) or as Anderson and Freebody (1983: 269) describe it ‘[…] a score on a Yes/No test provides a much more valid indicator of whether an examinee actually knows the meaning of the tested words than a score on a standardized multiple choice test’.

The disadvantage of the Yes/No format is the correction. Due to the presence of pseudowords, there are four possible answers, as can be seen in figure X: two correct ones and two false ones (Hommersom, 2003: 12): hit (correct answer), miss (false answer), false alarm (indicating a pseudoword as a real word) and finally false rejection (discover a pseudoword). The hits and correct rejections form the good answers, the misses and false alarms the false ones.
Meara and Buxton (1987, as cited in Hommersom, 2003: 13) used in their research a formula from Anderson and Freebody (1983) in order to calculate the scores of their participants. The score is designed in this way (cf. Figure 2)

\[
P^* (h) = \frac{P(h) - P(f)}{1 - P(f)}
\]

Figure 4: The formula to calculate the score of the Yes/No test.

Hommersom (2003: 13) explains the formula by saying ‘the false alarms P(f) are subtracted from the hits P(h) and divided by one minus the number of false alarms’. The score obtained is the true hit rate, P*(h). Despite the fact that there are still many doubts about this method, it did become clear that the Yes/No test represented a better view of the participants’ general vocabulary knowledge than the traditional multiple choice test. The latter gives a point for each correct answer but does not take into account that participants might guess for the correct answer whereas the presence of the pseudowords in the Yes/No test does. As can be seen in the formula, false alarms, i.e. guesses, are subtracted from the hits, i.e. the correct answers, which leads to a lower score and to a better representation of the participant’s proficiency.

### 3.3. The importance of high frequency words

High frequency words are ‘a small number of words that account for a very large proportion of the running words in a book’ (Nation, 1983: 13). Generally, the two thousand most frequent words of a language are called the high frequency words (Nation 1993: 193). Nation and Waring (1997: 9) argue that knowing these 2,000 words, will enable you to understand about 80% of a text. The text-type does not play any role, it can range from press to fiction to humour and more. However, Laufer (1989, cited in Nation & Waring 1997: 10) argues that you need to know 95% of the words in a text (text coverage) to understand it sufficiently.

---

3 Do you know the word? Word (woord), pseudoword (pseudowoord), false answers (foute antwoorden), good answers (goede antwoorden).
Nation and Meara agree that for second language learners, learning the high frequency words remains highly recommended and they note that

‘the information from frequency studies suggests a cost-benefit approach to deal with vocabulary. If we use frequency counts to distinguish high frequency from low-frequency words, then it seems clear that the high-frequency words need to be the first and main vocabulary goal of learners. These words are so frequent, so widespread and make up such a manageable group that both teachers and learners can successfully spend considerable time ensuring that they are well learned. The low-frequency words are so infrequent, have such a narrow range of occurrence and make up such a large group that they do not deserve teaching time.’ (Nation & Meara, 2002: 39)

Nation and Meara’s vision is clear: it is important to learn the high frequency words. However, they do not neglect the low-frequency words:

‘Of course, learners need to keep on learning low frequency words after they have learned the high-frequency words, but they should do this incidentally or deliberately in their own time. These strategies include guessing from context, learning from word cards, using word parts and dictionary use.’ (Nation & Meara, 2002: 39)

This also explains why Nation and Meara divide their tests (the Vocabulary Levels Test, the Productive Vocabulary Levels Test and the Foreign Language Vocabulary Test) according to frequency level.

As Nation and Meara (2002: 39) mentioned, low frequency words should not be neglected. Low frequency words are words that do not occur that much but which sometimes remain rather important for the message of a text. To illustrate this I have included an example by Nation (1990: 242-243) which displays text comprehension at a text coverage level of 80%. The example makes clear that despite knowing 80% of the words, comprehension of the text is not very easy.

| Text comprehension at a text coverage level of 80%, Nation (1990: 242-243) |
|---|---|
| In 1978/1979 New Zealand produced 9.15 million _____ meters of _____ logs (_____ _______) of which 59 percent was _____ (as newsprint, _______, sawn _____, logs, and so on). Productive _____ is expected to remain at about this level throughout most of this _______. But based on the _____ of wood which will become _____ from existing forests and planned new plantings, production will progressively increase to 20 million _____ meters a year by the turn of the century. If _____ planting rates are _____ with planting _____ satisfied in each _____ and the forests milled at the earliest opportunity, the _____ wood supplies could further increase to about 36 million _____ meters _____ in the period 2001-2015. The additional _____ supply should greatly _____ ______, even if much is used for _____ production. Even if used in an _____ form, the increasing wood supplies will _____ a larger _____ force, an improved roading network, and _____ and _______. If the trees are to be _____ then certain _____ must be made. They will include _____ in: |

• logging machinery and _____;
• logging trucks, and other _____ _____ for the _____ of _____ products;
• _____ and _____ roads (or rail or coastal shipping _____ where _____);
1. General introduction

1.1. Introduction and aim of the study

Today, English is all around us. In Flanders, children are frequently exposed to the English language, but what they exactly know, has not been researched yet. My aim is to investigate the size of their receptive knowledge of English and whether there is a difference in reading and listening to the language.

The proficiency of a language is linked to two other aspects, viz. the attitudes towards that specific language and whether there is frequent contact with that language.

In a first stage, I will analyse the children's attitudes towards second languages in general and towards English specifically. In a second stage, I will concentrate on how children get into contact with English. In a final stage, I will discuss the lexical knowledge of the children, both in reading and listening, via the tests I designed. I will also examine whether correlations can be found between the test scores and factors influencing the language learner.

1.2. Informants and setting

As I have already mentioned, my aim is to find what kind of vocabulary a non-instructed learner of English has already attained. I have chosen Flemish children of the fifth grade in primary school as participants in my research. They are non-instructed as they have not yet had any formal instruction of English but they have already been influenced by English by hearing it on television, on the radio, in songs, etc. or by reading it on the internet.

I conducted my research in March 2009 in three primary schools, viz. in the catholic primary school Sint Franciscus in Melle, in the free primary school Sint-Michiels in Merelbeke and in the Harp, a Freinetschool situated in Ghent. In the first two schools, the fifth grade comprised two classes and both participated. In the third school, the Freinetschool, classes are organised differently, viz. in living-groups so that children aged ten till twelve share the same class. In this school only those students who turn eleven this year, in 2009, participated. This led to a total number of 107 participants (48 children from Sint-Franciscus, 48 children from Sint-Michiels and 11 children from the Harp), all aged ten or eleven. In total, there were fifty six male participants and fifty one female participants.

Six children are bilingual. Student 2 is from Albanian origin and still speaks this language with her father. Likewise, students 9 and 40 are from Arabic origin and both continue speaking Arabic at home. Student 39 speaks Mandarin Chinese with his parents, who also know some English but no Dutch. Student 78 is raised in Dutch by his mother but in French but his father. Finally, student 99 is also bilingual but he does not mention his second mother tongue.

The majority of the participants’ parents have either both finished secondary education (30) or both studied further, but not at university (17) or one of the parents started working after secondary school whereas the other parent studied further, but not at university (24).

1.3. Procedure/Methodology

1.3.1. Questionnaire

I designed a questionnaire for the students, which was introduced by a set of general questions, including topics as age, sex, education of parents, employment of parents,.... Broadly speaking, the questionnaire contained two major divisions. The first part aimed at
getting an insight into the attitudes towards English whereas the second part wanted to find out how children get in contact with English. I borrowed various questions from Cassiman (2005).

The part investigating the attitudes towards English, was subdivided into two important parts: attitudes towards second language learning in general and attitudes towards English specifically.

The first section was construed in such a way that, to answer the question, the pupils had to tick off yes or no. If they wanted to, they could motivate their answers. The format of the next section, offered a semantic differential scale. This presents the participants with a range of questions. The participant then has to indicate to what extent he/she agrees with the proposition, by circling the number that approaches his/her opinion the most. I looked into six aspects, viz. aesthetic appeal, fun, toughness, importance of the language for the future, comprehensibility and finally production of English. For instance, the following question looks at the participants’ attitudes towards the importance of English for the future:

Do you think the English language is important for your future?

1: not very important
2: not important
3: neutral
4: important
5: very important

In the part investigating contact with English, I looked at English in the children’s close environment and at English in popular culture in Flanders. For some questions, the participants had to tick off yes or no and motivate their choice. For other questions, they just had to answer (for example: How many hours a day do you watch television?). For the final set of questions, the participants had to tick off their favourite TV-channels and TV-programmes in a column. I listed 54 programmes, all broadcast Wednesday, March 3, 2009 between 5pm and 9pm.

1.3.2. Reading and listening test

To examine the children’s receptive knowledge, I designed a test based on Meara & Buxton’s (1987) Yes/No test. As already explained in the previous chapter, the test presents the participants with sixty words in the target language. Then the participant has to indicate which words s/he knows and which s/he does not. Two thirds of these words are real, existing ones and the remaining one third comprises pseudowords, which are added to avoid guessing. This test is only meant for English language learners, so for people who have already had formal instruction of English and who are supposed to be able to distinguish real from pseudowords. I did not include the pseudowords since firstly, as I deal with primary school children who have never had any kind of formal instruction of English and secondly, as I am only interested in their basic vocabulary, not in a detailed knowledge about the vocabulary. Moreover, I deal with children and not with adult language learners. For these reasons, I believe it would be unfair to expect from children who have never had formal instruction of English to recognise English non-words. The test contains 100 words.

I have chosen the General Service List of English words (West:1953) as a starting point. This list is rather old, based on work done in the 30s and 40s of the past century, yet it is still the most useful one available as the relative frequency of various meanings of each word is given (Nation 1983:194). Because the list is already about seventy years old, I have cross-checked every word with the Longman dictionary of contemporary English (2007). All words figuring in West’s list but not in the Longman dictionary were excluded. Of the remaining words, I randomly selected 50 words. The other 50 words were selected on the basis of their frequency in a popular English-spoken television programme, viz. The Simpsons. After
having transcribed one episode of the Simpsons, I electronically selected the fifty most frequent words recurring in the transcription by means of Tom Cobbs’s *Compleat Lexical Tutor* (www.lextutor.ca), a website on which you can upload a document and which calculates the exact frequency of each word. I wanted half of the words to be taken from an English-spoken television programme as this might make it easier to see whether watching English-spoken television programmes has an influence on the proficiency in English. For instance, if several persons would gain significantly higher scores on the second half of the vocabulary test than on the first half, this could mean that English-spoken television programmes have a positive effect on English proficiency.

It needs to be noted that, as table 3 shows, there is a great difference in the repartition of word categories between the words in the first part of the test, a random selection of the thousand most frequently used words in English, and the second part, the fifty most frequent words occurring in an episode of the Simpsons. Despite the fact that nouns and verbs form the majority of the thousand most frequent words in English, hence the high number of these word-classes in the first part of the test, this does not seem to be the case in this particular television episode. In the television words on the other hand, especially the pronouns are highly salient (7 personal pronouns, 3 possessive pronouns, 2 demonstrative pronouns, 1 indefinite pronoun).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Word category</th>
<th>Number of words present in the randomly selected words part</th>
<th>Number of words present in the Simpsons selected words part</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nouns</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>verbs</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adjectives</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adverbs</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prepositions</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pronouns</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conjunctions</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Articles</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3: The repartition of word-classes in the assessed words

For the reading test, each participant was presented with a set of words and each had to indicate whether s/he knew the word or not. If s/he knew it, s/he had to show this by producing a translation, a synonym or a Dutch description. If I would not have asked the participants to prove they knew the word, they could have lied and said they knew them all. The words were presented in isolation and were not read to them, as my aim was to investigate whether there is a difference in listening to the words and reading them. For the listening test, I used the same set of words. In a first stage, each student individually had to come to me and then I read the words out loud and they had to tell me whether they knew the word or not, and again prove this by translating it or describing it in Dutch. This process took quite some time so in a second stage I had six to seven students come to me at the same time and instead of telling me the meaning of the words they had to write down the Dutch translation and/or description or a synonym.

The participants gained one point for each word for which they gave a correct translation, description or synonym. If they did not answer at all or gave a wrong translation, description or synonym they got zero points, so I did not subtract any points for making mistake. The total score is thus made up of the number of correct answers.

The reading tests, along with the questionnaires, were taken in class under the supervision of the teacher. On average, it took the participants one hour to complete both the
test and questionnaire. For the listening test, each student initially had to come to me. I read the words of the test out loud and then the student had to tell me whether s/he knew the word or not and prove this by translating it or describing it in Dutch. However, this process was quite time-consuming as it took about ten to fifteen minutes per student. Consequently, it took me three days to complete my research at the first school, Sint Franciscus. Therefore, I decided for the next two schools, to have six to seven students come to me at the same time. Then, taking the test took averagely twenty to thirty minutes per group, as I also needed time to calm down the children and get them to pay attention and remain quiet throughout the test. Testing the participants in groups and no longer individually allowed me to complete my survey at each of the next two schools, Sint Michiels and De Harp, in one day.

During the discussion of the results of my research, I will regularly compare my findings to those of Cassiman (2005) and Kooyman (2000) who both studied Flemish children’s knowledge of English before the age of formal instruction, their attitudes towards English and their means of contact with the language. More specifically, the former studied the productive and receptive knowledge of English lexis among nine- and ten-year old children, the latter looked at the lexical and syntactical knowledge of eleven- and twelve-year-old children. As the subject and target-group of my research is similar, I think it will be interesting to compare results.

2. Attitudes towards English and motivation
2.1. Introduction
This chapter contains two main parts. In the first part I will examine the children’s general attitudes towards second language acquisition. The attitudes towards French and English specifically will be dealt with in the second part. A number of the questions were copied from Cassiman (2005:57-75).
In the first part I asked the children four questions. Firstly, I asked them whether they like learning a foreign language. They are in the fifth grade of primary school, so this year formal instruction in French started, which could influence their choice: if they like learning French, a new foreign language, they will probably be enthusiastic as to learning languages in general as well. Secondly, I asked the pupils whether they would like to learn English in a school-context already in primary education. Thirdly, I asked them which language they like best, French or English. Finally, I also asked them whether anyone had already had some sort of formal instruction (of English) outside the school context, for example by participation in a language camp. This question will also return in the part about contact with English. The reason I included it here as well, is that people who have already participated in language camps, generally have very positive attitudes towards second language acquisition in general.
In the second part I was interested in the children’s attitudes towards English and French in particular. I included French, to examine whether English is generally seen as a more popular language than French. As already mentioned, I focused on six aspects.

2.2. Attitudes towards second language acquisition and motivation
2.2.1. Do you like learning a foreign language?
The general attitudes towards learning a foreign language are very positive. Only six out of the hundred and seven participants did not like the prospect and nearly all students motivated their choice. The most common reasons for being enthusiastic towards learning a new language is ‘because it is fun to learn something new in general’ (38), ‘because knowing several languages is important for the future’ (7) and because of communicative needs, viz. for being able to speak to people who do not know their mother tongue, Dutch in this case (41). One child, student 102, mentioned that he wanted to learn foreign languages to learn
about and get in contact with other cultures. The participants thus display a mix of instrumental and integrative motivations, viz. they are aware of the fact that being proficient in different languages, allows you to communicate with people of different linguistic and ethnic backgrounds and is necessary in certain jobs, such as jobs in a big company, in tourism or jobs that require a lot of travelling (i.e. instrumental motivation), but they also respond positively to the idea of learning a new language only because it is fun and interesting, or in the case of student 102 to come in contact with different cultures (i.e. integrative motivation).

Six children were resistant towards the prospect of learning another language. Participants 27 and 38 think that there is no need to learn a foreign language as they are not planning on going abroad ever and will thus never come in contact with people speaking a different language. Students 16 and 33 respectively answered that learning languages is boring and no fun. Student 39 is hesitant towards SLA because it is unknown, which suggests he is probably shy and afraid that he might not understand the language. Participant 48 finally, is reluctant to learn languages as it requires too much learning.

The same arguments for wanting to learn another language, i.e. the ability to communicate with other language speakers, better employment opportunities and the fun of learning something new, occur in the works of Demeulenaere (1995: 59-60), Kooyman (2000: 108), Cassiman (2005: 57-58) and Dermul (2008: 28-29).

2.2.2. Would you already like to learn English at primary school?

The majority of the participants, eighty specifically, answered positively to this question, the others negatively. The explanations are similar to the ones given to the previous question and again, they display a mix of instrumental and integrative motivation. The most frequently provided reason was that ‘it is fun to learn a foreign language’ or English more specifically (thirty informants). It must be noted that when the participants answered that English was fun, this was often in comparison with French, implying they rather want to learn English than French at school. Others gave more practical (i.e. instrumental) explanations: sixteen students noted that English is a world language and it is thus interesting to learn it. Seven other students wanted to learn English as it is the language of television, songs and games and learning it would allow them to understand everything better and to no longer be obliged to read the subtitles in English-spoken television programmes. Likewise, two students were enthusiastic about English as it is respectively the language of basketball-players and of rappers. Other reasons were ‘English is easier’, ‘I already know English’ and ‘I am going to an English-speaking country this year so it is interesting to know the language’. Finally one participant mentioned that she wanted to learn English so that she could help the foreigners in our country, who do not speak Dutch.

The other twenty seven students who answered negatively to the question state that they have just started to learn French and that learning two foreign languages would be too much and too difficult and that there is still enough time to do this later. One participant did not want to learn English at all as he claims he will never go abroad, hence there would be no need for him to learn the language.

Kooyman (2000: 107) obtained similar results during her research; 88% percent of her subjects were enthusiastic about learning English whereas 12% were not. Similar arguments for learning English were given as in this research (Kooyman 2000: 108): English is fun, beautiful, a world language, necessary to communicate when travelling and is important as to job prospects. A large number of her participants wanted to learn English to understand the lyrics of their favourite pop-songs and the English/American TV-shows better.

2.2.3. Have you ever had English language lessons? (At school, in a language camp…)

As already mentioned, this question will also return in the discussion about the means of contact with English but I included it here as well as people who have participated in a language camp probably have very positive attitudes towards second language learning in general. Four of the participants have already had English lessons, all in a language camp (participants 31, 44, 97 and 101). Another child has participated in a French language camp,
which could indicate an interest for languages in general (participant 35). This is confirmed when we look at his attitudes towards SLA, which show that he likes learning foreign languages and that he would already like to learn English. It is interesting to note that some students indicated television (participant 11, 15 and 61) or holidays abroad (participant 107) as a form of language instruction. This suggests that these children believe that these ways of contact with English have a definite influence on their proficiency in it.

2.3. Attitudes towards English
2.3.1. Introduction
In this chapter, I will examine the attitudes of the students towards English, but also towards French as I want to examine whether English is a more popular language than French. Every question was asked for both languages and these results are compared and represented by statistics. I will not discuss the more neutral answers but instead, I will talk in terms of a more positive attitude (scores 4 and 5) or negative attitude (scores 1 and 2) to English and French.

2.3.2. The questions
2.3.2.1. Which language do you like best? English or French?
The vast majority of the participants (82 out of the 107) prefer English to French. These results differ from previous ones, as in Demeulenaere (1995: 82), where only sixteen out of twenty-six students preferred English, and Cassiman (2005: 59) where a slight majority (13 out of 25 informants) liked English best. The preference for English can be explained by several reasons, the most important of which is the idea that English is easier and more fun than French (52). For some participants, only the fact that they found French a difficult language led them to state that they like English better. A second important reason for the preference for English is its status as a world language (16) and the fact that it is the most commonly used language in television, music and computer games (8). Some (3) participants also mentioned the pronunciation of English as a surplus. Others (3) noted the resemblance of English to Dutch as the cause of their preference. The reason of those participants who chose French over English was that they have already learned French and so understand it. Only one informant referred to the fact that Belgium is a bilingual Dutch-French country as the cause of his preference for French.

2.3.2.2. Aesthetic appeal
Do you think the English/French language is beautiful?
Diagram 1

As the statistics show, English is generally viewed as a more beautiful language than French, seventy one participants responded positively to English while only forty seven participants were positive towards French. A significant higher number of informants (26) also showed a clear dislike for French while only five informants thought of English as an ugly language. Both in Demeulenaere (1999: 55) and Cassiman (2005: 67-68) the phonetic structure of the English language was seen as a major criterion in ascribing positive values to
English, i.e. the children thought the language sounds better than Dutch. One child in Cassiman’s study (2005: 68) said that ‘I love you’ in English sounds more beautiful than in Dutch.

2.3.2.3. Fun
Do you think the English/French language is fun?

![Diagram 2](image)

When it comes to the fun of the language in question, it is even clearer that English is the more popular language. Whereas seventy six children displayed positive attitudes towards English with regard to fun, only forty one children thought of French in this way. The difference is especially significant with regard to scale five: significantly more participants think English is ‘very fun’. As with the aesthetic appeal, the children are again less hesitant in ascribing negative values to French (33) than to English (9).

In a further stage in the research, it became clear that for a large part of the children, the language was considered funny because it was either regarded as an easier language or as it was the language of television, music and computer games. The former shows that having fun in a language is closely associated with communicative competence. When children feel they understand a language and can already say some words in it, without ever having had instruction, it gives them a sense of satisfaction. The latter was also remarked by Cassiman (2005: 70), who said that the association of fun and a certain language ‘is very much related to the media through which they are confronted’ with the language. As we shall see later on, the English-spoken media children are confronted with, largely consists of films and soap operas, which are quite often of a humoristic nature.

2.3.2.4. Toughness
Do you think the English/French language is tough?[^4]

![Diagram 3](image)

The diagram immediately makes clear that French is not at all a tough language, as it is only seen by six informants as tough whereas seventy four view the language as not

[^4]: Tough with the connotation of cool, enhancing one’s status.
tough. For English on the other hand, there is no clear tendency as the whether the language is tough (35 students) or not (35 students). These findings differ from Cassiman’s (2005: 74). In her study 55% (15 students) believed English to be tough and only 11.1% (3 students) thought of English as not tough. She assumed that the toughness attributed to English could be linked to the amount of English swearing in youth culture. It needs to be noted that it is possible that some participants did not really understand the question. Often, they made the remark ‘just like any other language’, which shows that they do not interpret languages in terms of toughness. Other students however, additionally remarked during different questions, that they preferred English and wanted to learn it specifically because it is tough.

2.3.2.5. Importance for the future

Do you think the English/French language is important for your future?

![Diagram 4]

Clearly, both French and English are seen as necessary for the future. Few people ticked off the column ‘not very important’, nor ‘not important’. So, the children are aware that knowing several languages is a major factor in deciding whether to employ a person or not. There is no difference between the importance of English and French. Broadly, English gathered seventy nine positive votes and French seventy one. The fact that many children considered French too as important for the future, may suggest that they are aware of the fact that they live in a bilingual country (French – Dutch) and that they realise that it is necessary to know both languages, however this is not sure.

2.3.2.6. Comprehension of the language

Do you think the English/French language is easy to comprehend?

![Diagram 5]

The diagram shows that there is a clear preference for English being the easiest language to understand (54 students for English against 27 students for French). Likewise,

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5 Questions such as ‘Would you already like to learn English?’ and ‘Which language do you like most? English or French’
only twenty four participants viewed English as difficult to understand while no less than forty four participants thought French was hard to comprehend. This is quite surprising as one would think French would be viewed as the easiest language as it is already taught in the fifth grade of primary school. However, this also means that they have already encountered for the first time the grammatical difficulties of a foreign language. They have not yet had instruction of English so they have not yet encountered these same problems with that language. Hence, they think it is an easy language. Moreover, French, in contrast to English, is not heard frequently on Flemish television and is hardly encountered with in natural surroundings.

Cassiman (2005: 64) obtained different results. In her study 51.8% (14 students) found English difficult to understand. She claims these results can be explained precisely by the fact that those children were aware of the fact that they have not yet had instruction of English and hence cannot judge yet whether the language is difficult or not.

2.3.2.7. Production of the language

Do you think the English/French language is easy to produce?

For this question, the results for both English and French are quite similar. Forty six children find English easy to speak whereas thirty seven find French easy. English is considered difficult to speak by thirty one students and French by thirty seven. There is thus no clear-cut preference for one of the two languages.

When we compare these results to the ones of the previous question, it is remarkable that the children think that English is almost equally easy to speak and to understand. One would think that the production of a language would be considered more difficult than the reception of a language. Yet, this is not the way the children estimate their own capacities and may be due to the fact that the children do not produce the English language often. They just think that if one can understand it, one can produce it. It is also possible that they think they can speak English, because they regularly sing English songs. Though often, they just repeat sounds without really understanding what they are singing. As already mentioned, some children also noted the resemblance between English and Dutch, which probably made them think that speaking English cannot be very difficult.

### 2.3.3. Conclusion

We can conclude from this overview, that the general attitudes towards English are positive. When the children were asked about their willingness to learn a foreign language, they were generally very enthusiastic and they displayed a mix of both instrumental and integrative motivation. When specifically asked about it, the children prefer English to French. This was later on confirmed when they were asked for their different attitudes towards respectively English and French. The results for both languages were only similar with regard to the importance of the languages for the future and the production of the languages. For all
the other questions, English turned out the be viewed more positively by the informants, which suggests that English has a higher status in popular culture.

3. Contact with English
3.1. Introduction
As already mentioned, English is omnipresent in our lives. We hear it on television, on the radio, read it on the internet… In this chapter, I will examine how and where the participants come in contact with English.
In a first part, I will question the presence of English in their close environment; whether they know English native speakers, whether they have already been to an English speaking country or whether they have ever been taught English.
In a second part, I will examine the contact with English in popular culture. Both in Kooymans (2000: 134), Cassiman (2005: 80) and Dermul (2008: 38) the participants designated television as the primary source of English influence. Therefore I will concentrate on the participants’ television behaviour but also on their computer behaviour as this medium too, has become more and more important in children’s lives.

3.2. Questionnaire
3.2.1. English in the close environment
3.2.1.1. Do you know anyone who speaks another language than Dutch (English, French)? If yes, what language?
When answering this question, many children indicated their bilingual fellow students, of whom they know that they speak a different language at home, and/or their own parents of whom they know that they are able to speak a foreign language. However, in both cases, the participants never hear the language as such as it is nor the language used with their friends,
nor the language of communication within their own family. There is thus no direct contact with the foreign language.

With the exception of the informants who mentioned their parents and fellow students, there are in all twenty two participants who know a person who speaks another language than Dutch and with whom they have direct contact (naturally, the six bilingual students also figure among these). The people speaking a foreign language mentioned, are mostly family members of the participants, who they see regularly. Only in three occasions, the people speaking a foreign language are friends who they have met during summer holidays. There are only three among the twenty two participants whose family and/or friends speak English, in all other cases the foreign language is French, Italian, Spanish, Chinese, Japanese, Arabic, Albanian, Korean, Russian or Thai.

3.2.1.2. Have you ever visited an English-speaking country (or a country where English was often used)? If yes, which country? (for example Great Britain, the USA, Ireland, …)

Eleven out of the one hundred and seven students have already visited an English-speaking country, more particularly Great Britain, Ireland, Scotland, The United States of America (New York), South Africa and Canada. Most of these participants have had direct but relatively shallow contact with English. Participant 106 on the other hand, who went to South Africa received a direct and intense contact with the English language as he stayed there during the whole period with family of his who exclusively spoke English. Participant 50 has family living in Washington, but he has not yet visited them. Nine other informants claim that they have learned quite some English during their holidays abroad in non-English-speaking countries, such as Egypt, Turkey, Cyprus, Bulgaria and even Spain. In these countries English seems to be used as a lingua franca with foreign tourists and especially with the children. The language was for instance used during all the hotel entertainment activities and also among the children of various nationalities themselves.

3.2.1.3. Have you ever had English language lessons (At school, in a language camp, …) ?

As I have already mentioned, four of the participants have already had English lessons, all in a language camp. Another child has participated in a French language camp, which proved to have a beneficial effect on his attitudes towards second language learning in general. Though some children viewed television (participants 11, 15 and 61) or holidays abroad (participant 107) as a form of language instruction, none of the participants, except for the four mentioned above, have received formal instruction in English.

3.2.2. English in popular culture: television and computer games

3.2.2.1. Medium of contact with English

How do you come in contact with English (television, radio, computer(games), books,…)?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Medium of contact</th>
<th>Number of persons designating this medium as a means of contact with English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Television</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Radio and songs</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Computer</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Games</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>— Holidays abroad</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>— Books</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>— Persons at home</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4: The medium of contact with English

This table shows the children’s main means of contact with English. The two major media of contact are television and the computer, including the Internet. Games are also designated as an important source of English influence. Often, the participants indicated both
the computer and games at the same time, as, as we will also see later on, the English-
spoken games can often be found on the Internet. The radio and songs in general were less
frequently associated with the English language, which is quite surprising as in the question
about the participants’ willingness to already learn English (cf. supra 2.2.2.), several children
answered positively towards wanting to learn English as it is the language of songs.
The question was open-ended so that the participants could add media of contact with
English which had not been mentioned. Nineteen students took this opportunity and three
additional media returned, viz. holidays abroad, books and persons at home. With this latter,
the students pointed to their parents who know several languages and to their older siblings
learning English, German and Spanish in secondary school. The fact that holidays abroad
figures both as an answer to this question and to the question asking about English language
lessons (cf. supra 2.2.3.), once more emphasizes the assumed importance of direct contact
with another language.

3.2.2.2. Time spent at the computer
How many hours a day do you spend at the computer? How many hours a week do you
spend at the computer?

On average, children spent 6.4 hours a week at the computer, or 0.9 hours a day (=
54 minutes). This low number can be explained by the fact that twenty six children are
allowed to spent only one or two days at the computer a week and that thirty six children are
allowed to use the computer on a daily basis. As we will see later on, this contrasts highly
with the television habits, where nearly all children watch television every day. Out of the
hundred and seven participants, there are only three exceptions, viz. participants 43, 44 and
106, who respectively claim to use the computer three, four and six hours each day. One
child does not own a computer.

3.2.2.3. Activities at the computer
What do you do at the computer (playing games, surfing the internet, chatting,…)?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Computer activity:</th>
<th>Number of persons performing the activity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Games</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Surfing the web</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chatting</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homework</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5: Computer Activities

Five students work at the computer to carry out homework assignments. All the others
use the computer for entertainment. Forty two children only ticked off one computer activity,
among whom one person who exclusively uses the computer for her/his homework. In all the
other cases, the participants indicated multiple activities.
Playing games at the computer is most popular, next there is chatting and surfing the
internet. I also asked the participants to say whether the games they play, the websites they
visit and chatting are mostly English or Dutch-spoken/written, but only a minority answered
this part. Therefore, the results are not conclusive. Twenty seven children claimed their
games were in Dutch, whereas eighteen children mostly played English games. The chatting
as well is mostly conducted in Dutch (by 13 students), nine students state they also chat in
English, among whom five participants who state to only come in contact via English and
television, two participants who claim to have learned English during their holidays abroad
and finally two participants who sometimes hear English from their siblings. Finally, sixteen
informants frequently visit English websites. Nineteen other informants on the other hand,
state they mostly surf on Dutch websites.

3.2.2.4. Time spent before the television
How many hours a day do you watch television? How many hours a week do you watch television?

On average, students watch television 11.5 hours a week or 1.6 hours a day. This number is lower than expected, as in both Cassiman (2005: 99) and Dermul (2008: 40) students watched television averagely for 18 hours a week. Most of the participants watch television on a daily basis, however there are some exceptions where the children are only allowed to watch television one or maximally two days a week. This is the case with participants 26, 57, 79, 87, 102, 103 and 105. Three participants do not have a television at home. Although the average amount of watching television is 1.6 hours a day, some informants, namely participants 17, 46 and 52, respectively claimed to watch television nine, eight and seven hours a day. At first sight, this seems to be an exaggeration as students of these schools have class until 3.30 pm or 4 pm, which leaves them with the possibility of watching television maximally six hours. However, each of the students later pointed out that they already watch television in the morning, during their breakfast and while preparing to go school, which suggests that the numbers after all, may not be an exaggeration.

3.2.2.5. Dutch-spoken programmes versus English-spoken programmes
Do you prefer Dutch-spoken programmes to English-spoken programmes?

As the diagram shows, the participants equally like Dutch and English-spoken television programmes: fifty three prefer English, fifty two Dutch and two students cannot make a choice. It should be noted that those two students who could not make a choice do not have a television at home. The students who preferred Dutch programmes, especially pointed to the comprehensibility of the native language. One chose Dutch because then he does not have to read the subtitles. Another person stated that Dutch-spoken programmes were just funnier. The students choosing English all claim that ‘English sounds better’.

3.2.2.6. Subtitling versus dubbing
Do you prefer English-spoken programmes with subtitles to dubbed programmes (dubbed: programmes in which a Dutch voice replaces the English voice)?
In this case, nearly all students agree: they prefer subtitles to dubbing (89 children are in favour of subtitles, 16 in favour of dubbing and two are undecided). The most common criticism against dubbing is that the voices are weird, that they do not match the actors and that it is unnatural. They also pointed at the pedagogical benefit of subtitles, viz. listening to a foreign language while reading it in your mother tongue. Those students in favour of dubbing, give the following reasons: ‘you immediately understand what is said’ (4) ; ‘if you miss a subtitle, you still understand the plot’ (1) ; ‘I cannot read fast enough’ (1) ; ‘I do not like to read while watching television’ (1) and ‘it is funnier’ (1). Eight informants did not provide a reason why they prefer dubbing.

3.2.2.7. Favourite sort of television programme

Which sort of programmes do you like most?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sort of programme</th>
<th>Number of persons fond of this sort of programme</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cartoons</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Films</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soap-operas</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reality-TV</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The News</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Documentaries</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6: Favourite sort of television programme

Films, cartoons and soap operas, respectively watched by seventy nine, fifty three and forty two children, are clearly the most popular type of programmes. The first and the latter are probably often English-spoken, as popular films and soap-operas are regularly American and Australian productions. The cartoons on the other hand, will probably be largely Dutch-spoken, due to the popular children’s cartoon networks Ketnet and Nickelodeon (cf. infra 3.2.2.9.).

3.2.2.8. Favourite television channel

What are your favourite TV-channels? Put a cross next to your favourite channels.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>N°</th>
<th>Channel</th>
<th>Number of children</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Nickelodeon</td>
<td>Watched by 87 children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Ketnet</td>
<td>Watched by 66 children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>VTM</td>
<td>Watched by 53 children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>VT4</td>
<td>Watched by 53 children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Eén</td>
<td>Watched by 49 children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>2Be</td>
<td>Watched by 45 children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Jim TV</td>
<td>Watched by 37 children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>TMF</td>
<td>Watched by 32 children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Sporza</td>
<td>Watched by 29 children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>MTV</td>
<td>Watched by 28 children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Eurosport</td>
<td>Watched by 24 children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>National Geographic</td>
<td>Watched by 20 children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Vijf TV</td>
<td>Watched by 17 children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Canvas</td>
<td>Watched by 9 children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Vitaya</td>
<td>Watched by 9 children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Nederland 3</td>
<td>Watched by 4 children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Nederland 1</td>
<td>Watched by 1 child</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The five most popular television channels, ranging from most popular to less popular, are Nickelodeon, Ketnet, VTM and VT4 (who share an equally large audience) and Één. They nearly all (except for VT4) predominantly broadcast Dutch-spoken television programmes, however, this does not imply that there are no English-spoken programmes on these channels. The English-spoken ones are just less numerous than the Dutch-spoken ones. The next channel in line, 2BE especially contains English-spoken programmes. The music television channels also still attract a relatively high number of viewers. There, the music most of the time is in English. However, the host who announces the different songs speaks Dutch and most of the actual programmes that are broadcast on this channel are also in Dutch.

These results suggest that ten and eleven year-old children mainly watch Dutch-spoken television programmes. This would contradict to some extent with the answers given to question 3.2.2.5. where there seemed to be a slight preference for English-spoken television programmes. However, firm conclusions with regard to the linguistic nature of most frequently watched television-programmes, can only be drawn if we specifically look at the programmes themselves (see 3.2.2.9.).

### 3.2.2.9. Favourite television programmes

What are your favourite TV-programmes (this means you watch the programme at least three times a week)

In all, I listed 54 TV-programmes in the questionnaire. In table 7 you can see the forty programmes which proved to be the most popular. The first column represents the scale of popularity, with the most popular programme ranked above. The second column indicates the number of participants who watch the programmes, the third column displays the name of the TV-programme and the fourth column shows whether the programme is Dutch-spoken or English-spoken (English subtitled).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>N°</th>
<th>N°</th>
<th>Programme</th>
<th>Language</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>Het huis Anubis</td>
<td>Dutch-spoken</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>The Simpsons</td>
<td>English-spoken (dubbed)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>SpongeBob Square Pants</td>
<td>Dutch-spoken (dubbed)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>Sketch Up</td>
<td>Dutch-spoken and English-spoken (dubbed)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>Fairly Odd Parents</td>
<td>Dutch-spoken (dubbed)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>Karrewiet</td>
<td>Dutch-spoken</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>Op Schok</td>
<td>Dutch-spoken</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>Thuis</td>
<td>Dutch-spoken</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>Zoey 101</td>
<td>Dutch-spoken (dubbed)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>Zo is er maar één: de Cup</td>
<td>Dutch-spoken</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>Oggy en de kakkerlakken</td>
<td>Dutch-spoken</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>Beauty &amp; de Nerd</td>
<td>Dutch-spoken</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>George van de Jungle</td>
<td>Dutch-spoken</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>Wayside</td>
<td>Dutch-spoken (dubbed)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>Familie</td>
<td>Dutch-spoken</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>America’s funniest home videos</td>
<td>English-spoken</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>South Park</td>
<td>English-spoken (dubbed)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>De Familie Flodder</td>
<td>Dutch-spoken</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>Friends</td>
<td>English-spoken (dubbed)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>Louis Louise</td>
<td>Dutch-spoken</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>Man bijt Hond</td>
<td>Dutch-spoken</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>Disney’s de Vervangers</td>
<td>Dutch-spoken</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
If we look at all forty programmes, then ten are English-spoken and twenty nine Dutch-spoken (one programme, programme 4, is partially English-spoken and partially Dutch-spoken). It thus seems that there is great preference for Dutch-spoken television programmes. If we watch the programmes that are viewed by more than twenty five persons, this conclusion becomes even firmer, with twenty Dutch-spoken programmes and three English-spoken ones. Moreover, if we look at the five or even ten most favourite shows, we see that they are all Dutch-spoken. So we can firmly conclude that Dutch programmes are more popular than English ones. This also shows that despite the children’s self-reported preference for English or Dutch programmes (cf. supra 3.2.2.5.), the most favourite programmes remain Dutch-spoken ones.

### Table 8: Favourite television programmes

<p>| | | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>Drakenjagers</td>
<td>Dutch-spoken</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>Click-ID</td>
<td>Dutch-spoken</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>According to Jim</td>
<td>English-spoken (subtitled)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>The Sleepover Club</td>
<td>Dutch-spoken</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>JAM</td>
<td>Dutch-spoken</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>Komen eten</td>
<td>Dutch-spoken</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>Aniamniacs</td>
<td>Dutch-spoken (dubbed)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>Gawyn</td>
<td>Dutch-spoken</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>My Wife and Kids</td>
<td>English-spoken (subtitled)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>Zoé Kezako</td>
<td>Dutch-spoken</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>De Schuld van VTM</td>
<td>Dutch-spoken</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>Bones</td>
<td>English-spoken (subtitled)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>One Tree Hill</td>
<td>English-spoken (subtitled)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>Hart voor mekaar</td>
<td>Dutch-spoken</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>The Nanny</td>
<td>English-spoken (subtitled)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Mooi en Meedogenloos</td>
<td>English-spoken (subtitled)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Futurama</td>
<td>English-spoken (subtitled)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Zoom</td>
<td>Dutch-spoken</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4. The reading and listening tests

4.1. Introduction

In this last part, I will concentrate on the reading and listening tests. The previous part showed that children mostly get in contact with English via television so I assume they will comprehend the words best while listening. In the first part I will investigate whether there is indeed a significant difference between reading and listening. In a second part, I will look at the nature of the frequently known words and analyse the nature of the most frequent errors. Finally, I will try to find out whether there are correlations between the results of the tests and the factors influencing the language learner (as discussed in chapter 1). I divided the participants in three groups, according to their scores on the test. The strong group consists of the students who obtained a score of 75 to 100. The middle group comprises the students with a score between 25 and 75. Finally, the weak group is the group of students who scored 25 or less.

4.2. Reading versus listening
Based on the assumption that children designate the television as the main medium of contact with English (Kooyman, 2000: 134 ; Cassiman, 2005: 80 ; Dermul 2008: 38), I believed that they would be better in listening to English words than in reading them. This hypothesis was largely confirmed: in all, eighty six children obtained better results when listening while only seventeen excelled when reading. Four students (participants 20, 43, 10 and 48) obtained exactly the same results, viz. scores 79, 89, 23 and 33, for both the reading and listening tests.

However, these results need to be commented on in more detail. Firstly, if we take a closer look it becomes clear that only the majority of the middle and weak groups are better in the listening test whereas the children belonging to the strong group tend to obtain better results during the reading test, viz. among the twenty students being part of the strong group, eleven obtained higher scores on the reading test and only seven on the listening test (two participants obtained equal scores). In the other two groups, the weak and middle groups, no more than respectively one and five participants were better in reading whereas respectively thirty four and forty five children were better in listening. The divergence between these groups, the strong group on the one hand and the weak and middle on the other hand, is very remarkable.

Secondly, the difference in scores among the participants of the strong group is relatively small, in contrast to the internal difference in scores within the weak and middle groups. In the strong group, scores range from zero to maximally twelve. On average, score divergence between reading and listening is 4.1. In the weak group on the other hand, scores vary between zero and forty five and hence the average score divergence is 15.75, which forms a major contrast with the divergence score from the strong group. In the middle group finally, scores range between zero and forty one with an average score divergence of 12.61. This shows that the more and the better children know English words, the less the format, viz. written text or string of speech, matters. The children of the strong group thus know the word or do not both in the written and the spoken form. For the children of the middle and weak groups this is not yet the case: they clearly score better while listening, which suggests that they may already know the spoken form but not yet the written form. Only if their knowledge of English will expand, they will probably also be able to recognise the written form. These conclusions suggest that the assumption that primarily having contact with English by the spoken word (television) would lead to better results for the listening test is indeed valid. It suggests that frequently hearing the English language has a positive effect on EFL development.

4.3. Analysis and nature of the known vocabulary

4.3.1. Vocabulary known by more than 75% of the participants

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6 I calculated the average score divergence of each group by adding up the difference in the reading and listening score of each participant and then dividing the total through the number of participants belonging to the specific group.
If we consider the vocabulary known by more than 75% of the participants, it becomes clear that the number of words known by the majority of the children is in fact fairly low, only ten words in the reading test and twenty four in the listening test were recognised by eighty children or more. It is also quite surprising that significantly more words appear to be known during the listening test, especially among the nouns.

The hypothesis that nouns are most easily acquired is confirmed, at least with regard to the listening test. The list samples twenty nine nouns and the children respectively understood five (17.2%) and eleven (37.9%) words on the reading and listening tests. Boy, car, game, world and birthday were almost known by everyone in both tests. The words additionally recognised during the listening test are city, hospital, life, night, operation and summer. This suggests that the conclusion we draw in 4.2., viz. that children probably first understand the words when they hear them and only in a later and more advanced stage also while seeing the written form, is indeed valid.

The class of pronouns turns out to be very well known as well. Out of the fourteen pronouns, among which eight personal pronouns (she, you, I, it, he, we, me, him), three possessive pronouns (my, your, his), two demonstrative pronouns (that, this) and one indefinite pronoun (what), respectively three (21.4%) and five (35.7%) were known. It needs to be noted that the class of personal pronouns is quite restricted, in contrast to all other word-classes present, and thus easier to learn and remember.

The words belonging to the other word-classes were not frequently recognised. Out of the ten adjectives figuring in the test, only one was recognised in both the reading (10%) and listening (10%) tests, viz. normal, a word of which the orthography and pronunciation closely resembles that of its Dutch counterpart, normaal. Likewise, only one preposition out of the seven turned out to be frequently known in both tests (14.3%), viz. for, which just as with normal resembles the Dutch voor. While none of the ten adverbs was recognised during the reading test (0%), three were recognised during the listening test (30%), viz. here, now and there. The reason for why they were only known by 75% of the participants in this latter test is probably that the orthography of the words is not that transparent, in contrast to the pronunciation of the words. Here and there are probably easily associated with the Dutch hier and daar. As to now, children often translated the word in the reading test by weten (to know) or neen (no), which emphasizes that they do not yet master the written form of the English words. For the exact same reason, the article no was only frequently known in the listening test. No was the only article of the three present that was recognised in the listening test.
test (33.3%), none was recognised during the reading test (0%). Finally, none of the twenty-four verbs was recognised during the reading test (0%), two were during the listening test (8.3%), viz. to love and to go. The verbs were the second most represented word-class in the test which clearly shows that verbs are difficult to acquire for non-instructed learners of English. It is also worthwhile to note that quite some students did not translate the verb to love as such (as liefhebben, graag zien) but as a noun (liefde) while this was never the case with other verbs.

4.3.2. Vocabulary known by 50% of the participants and more

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Word category</th>
<th>Number of words tested (100)</th>
<th>Number of words known by 50% of the participants and more in the reading test (37)</th>
<th>Number of words known by 50% of the participants and more in the listening test (54)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nouns</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>verbs</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adjectives</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adverbs</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prepositions</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pronouns</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conjunctions</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Articles</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 11: Vocabulary known by more than 50% of the participants

If we consider the words known by more than 50% of the children (fifty four children), as represented in table 11, the analysis broadly confirms the previous results. As with the analysis of the words known by more than 75% of the participants, the word-classes of nouns and pronouns seem to be known best. During the reading and listening test, respectively 55.2% and 58.6% of the nouns and 50% and 71.4% of the pronouns were recognised. During the reading test, the participants knew four personal pronouns, two possessive pronouns and the indefinite pronoun, during the listening test however they recognised all personal pronouns except for she and it, two possessive pronouns, one demonstrative pronoun and the indefinite pronoun. Whereas only one adjective was known by more than 75% of the participants, no less than five adjectives (50%) are known by 50% of the informants or more, viz. alone, down\(^7\), easy, normal and dead in the reading test and alone, down, easy, normal and just in the listening test. In contrast to a preliminary research about the receptive vocabulary knowledge of English among children in primary school (Dermul, 2008: 48), where the majority of the participants translated down by verdrietig (sad) as a consequence of the popular phrase feeling down (meaning feeling depressed, sad), nearly all children in this research translated the word by its literal meaning beneden. 50% of the informants were also familiar with one preposition in the reading test (14.3%) and with five prepositions in the listening tests (71.4%). Of the ten adverbs, respectively two (20%) and five were known (50%).

\(^7\) As in a previous research (Dermul, 2008) the adverb down (beneden) was mostly translated by the adjective sad (verdrietig), I included the word in the present research with its adjectival meaning in the word category of the adjectives.
As to the verbs, there is quite a difference between the reading and listening test, in the former only three words (12.5%) out of the twenty four turned at to be known, in the latter ten (41.6%).

Finally, the students recognised one conjunction in both tests, viz. and and respectively two and one articles, viz. the and no, and, no.

These specific results suggest that especially nouns and pronouns and then also adjectives and adverbs are acquired first. Verbs, prepositions, conjunctions and determiners (articles) follow. These findings suggest that non-instructed L2 learners first learn entities which can be designated and characterised (for instance by adjectives). Once the adjectives are known, one learn adverbs. Verbs are only acquired in a later stage.

### 4.3.3. Semantic analysis of the most frequently known nouns

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nouns known by 50% of the participants and more during the reading test</th>
<th>Nouns known by 50% of the participants and more during the listening test</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Boy</td>
<td>Operation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Car</td>
<td>Summer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City</td>
<td>Woman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>World</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Game</td>
<td>Birthday</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hospital</td>
<td>Brain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Life</td>
<td>Book</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Night</td>
<td>Paper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boy</td>
<td>Operation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Car</td>
<td>Summer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City</td>
<td>Woman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>World</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Game</td>
<td>Birthday</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hospital</td>
<td>Brain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Life</td>
<td>Book</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Night</td>
<td>Foot</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Island</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 12: Focus on the semantics of the nouns known by more than 50% of the participants

As we have seen, the words most frequently known by the participants belong to the grammatical classes of pronouns and nouns. I will now focus on the semantic nature of the most frequently known nouns, i.e. the ones known by more than fifty four participants (50%) and examine whether a semantic pattern can be established among these.

In a preliminary research about the receptive vocabulary knowledge of English among children in primary school (Dermul, 2008: 50), I was able to establish a semantic pattern for nouns known by more than 75% of the participants. One pattern constituted the person-nouns, comprising words such as brother, sister, boy, family and woman, all designating specific persons. Another pattern found was the popular nouns, among which figured words such as action, game, party, world and date, all of them words that are frequently heard or read and are therefore part of children’s everyday vocabularies.

Here however, such patterns cannot be established. There are only two instances of person-nouns (boy and woman) and four instances of popular nouns (date, game, world and birthday). Moreover, no semantic link can be established among the rest of the words. It thus seems that the nature of the nouns which a person knows or does not know is not semantically founded. On the reverse, words such as hospital, operation, book, brain, foot and island suggest that the resemblance to the L2, Dutch in this case, is a major criterion. This would for instance also explain why no less than seventy one participants recognised island, pronounced /aIlənd/, in the listening test whereas only thirty participants recognised it in the reading test. Instead, they then often translated island by ijsland (Iceland) due to the written presence of the –s.

It is thus possible that the nature of the nouns that are most easily acquired is partially founded on the semantic nature of the words and partially on the resemblance, both in pronunciation as in orthography, with the L1.

### 4.4. Analysis and nature of the most frequently made errors
The errors made by the children are of different natures. In the diagrams above, the repartition of the nature of the errors in the reading (diagram 9) and the listening test (diagram 10) can be found.

As the diagrams illustrate, most mistakes cannot be explained. For instance, participants who translated *accept* by *met* (with), *foot* by *deken* (blanket), *write* by *in je dromen* (in your dreams) etc. Therefore, I will not attempt to analyse this set of errors more thoroughly.

Next to the inexplicable errors, most errors can be ascribed to L1 interference, both to orthographic and phonemic interference. This means that the students see (orthographic interference) or hear (phonemic interference) something in the English word which sounds familiar and they try to discover a Dutch word in it. Some striking examples of orthographic L1 interference are *army* translated by *arm* (arm), *car* by *kar* (cart), *foot* by *fout* (fault) and *soon* by *zoon* (son). Examples of phonemic L1 interference are *bad* translated by *bed* (bed), *paper* by *peper* (pepper) and *soon* by *zoen* (kiss). Both types of L1 interference were found in both tests but naturally, the orthographic type was more common in the reading test and the phonemic one in the listening test. This implies that some participants are able to pronounce words correctly on the sole basis of the written form, for instance *to* /tu:/ translated by the Dutch *toe* /tu:/, and that others also know how a word is written, on the sole basis of the spoken form, for instance *soon* /su:n/ translated by *zoon* /zo:n/.

Only one example of L2 interference could be found, i.e. interference from the French language. Four participants translated *we* by *ja*, the meaning of the French word *oui*, which is pronounced in the same way as *we* /wi:/.

In the following set of errors, labelled *semantic field*, the participants manage to approach the overall semantic field of the word but they fail to give the exact, correct translation of the word. Frequently, words were translated by their antonyms. Some recurrent examples are the translation of *business* by *geld* (money), *to cost* by *betalen, kopen* or *duur* (pay, buy or expensive), *to die* by *doden* (to kill), *to have* by *geven* (to give), *woman* by *man* (man) etc. All these translations are in the correct semantic field. The children for instance knew that a business is closely associated with money and hence wrote down this word. The same holds for the verb *to cost*, of which everyone understood that the word has connotations with money. It is rather remarkable that only a minority of the participants, thirteen in the reading test and thirty in the listening test, knew the meaning of the word, as it is in fact similar to the Dutch equivalent *kosten*. Further, in *to die*, the meaning of dying was detected, but the children did not know whether the verb had a passive meaning (to die) or an active one (to kill). *To have* and *woman* finally were both rendered by their respective antonyms, viz. *to give* and *man*.

In a last set of errors, the *homophones*, the words were translated by the Dutch equivalent of similar English words. I had expected the words *to* and *eye* to form a problem during the listening test, as both have a homophonic counterpart, respectively *two* and *I*. Though I expected that no one would recognise the meaning of *to* and would instead translate its homophonic counterpart *two*, the majority of the children did translate it by *om* or
This implies that those who translated it by *om*, also know that *to* is used with verbs. The majority of the participants translated *eye* correctly, possibly due to the fact that I had inserted an example sentence, viz. my eye hurts. Yet, twenty students translated its homophonic counterpart *I*. These homophones formed a problem both in the reading and listening tests.

In addition to the homophones, also other words were mistaken for other words because of their close resemblance. For instance, *body* was rendered by *vriend* (buddy). Usually, a minimal difference existed between the source word (the word in the test) and the ultimate word (the word it was believed to be). In the case of *body* /bɒ di/ and buddy /bʌdi/, the difference is in the use of the vowel, viz. the open back vowel ɒ is used in the source word, the central open-mid vowel ʌ in the ultimate word. Some of these errors were more comprehensible than others, viz. *she* /ʃi:/ was mistaken for *to see* /si:/, *down* /dʌn/ was mistaken for *town* /taʊn/, *night* /naɪt/ was mistaken for *nine* /naɪn/ vs. *to write* /raɪt/ was mistaken for *to ride* /raɪd/, *dead* /ded/ was mistaken for *dad* /daed/, and *aend* /ænd/ was mistaken for *end* /end/ etc. In these last examples, the differences are much more subtle and harder to perceive, especially for a non-instructed learner of English.

As already mentioned, the homophones formed a problem both in the reading and listening tests. In all, twenty four words were mistaken for another during the reading test and twenty five during the listening test. This suggests that the participants are able to pronounce the words nearly correctly and mainly rely on the pronunciation of the words to decide on the meaning. They do not seem to mind the written form and consequently, the written form does not disambiguate the possible ambiguity between some words.

4.5. Correlations between the results and factors influencing the language learner

4.5.1. Motivation and attitudes

As already mentioned, different researchers do not distinguish between attitudes and motivation (Bot & al, 2005: 72; Larsen-Freeman & Long, 1991: 175) and I will not do this either.

Table 13, on the following page, presents the average attitudes towards English of each participant belonging to the strong and weak groups, alongside their scores on the reading and listening tests. The attitudes can range from zero (very negative) to ten (very positive). An additional + or – was added when the participants were explicitly positive or negative towards second language learning in general. A complete overview of all the participants’ attitudes towards English and second language learning can be found in appendix 6.

If we look at the table, it immediately becomes clear that the attitudes towards English are more positive among the participants belonging to the strong group (numbers range between 6 and 9.6, with an average attitude of 8.2) whereas the participants of the weak group display less positive attitudes, and sometimes even negative attitudes towards English (numbers range from 4.3 to 9.3, with an average of 6.3). Moreover, four informants explicitly display negative feelings towards second language learning in general whereas in the strong group, only one person displays such feelings. All this suggests that positive attitudes towards L2 indeed enhance the proficiency in the language whereas negative attitudes are usually associated with less positive test scores and less proficiency in the L2. However, it does not yet prove that there is an absolute link between motivation and attitudes and proficiency in the L2.
Table 13: Correlation between test scores and attitudes towards ESL (strong and weak groups)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>39</th>
<th>7.3-</th>
<th>97</th>
<th>85</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<tr>
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<td>46</td>
<td>9.3</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>104</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

13 for instance also shows that some students (participants 84 and 90), though they do not have such positive attitudes, do manage to obtain high scores on their tests. Moreover, some students displaying very positive attitudes did not obtain good scores at all. Participant 35 for instance has attitude 8+ but scored no more than nine on the reading test and fourteen on the listening test. Participant 46 as well displays extremely positive attitudes towards English (9.3) but only scores fifteen and thirty on both tests. Though this table does not show it, the same processes can be detected among the middle group, viz. (1) generally positive attitudes are associated with high scores and negative attitudes with low scores, (2) nevertheless positive attitudes are sometimes linked to low scores and negative attitudes to high scores.
Therefore I conclude that having positive attitudes towards the target language and towards second language learning generally, but not necessarily, leads to a heightened proficiency in the L2 and that there is a tendency that students having no motivation and negative attitudes will obtain lower scores on L2 language tests. Yet, having negative attitudes does not prohibit a person from attaining proficiency in the L2.

Nevertheless, one may continue to debate as to the nature of positive/negative attitudes, viz. whether they are the source or rather the result of good/bad scores on L2 language tests.

4.5.2. Input and interaction

In a previous section we saw that the students indicated television and computer (games) as their primary means of contact with English. This could mean that those children who frequently watch television, and more specifically English-spoken television programmes, or who frequently play computer games, obtain higher scores on the test. We have also seen that quite some participants have indicated to come into contact with English on holidays abroad and that some participants even have English-speaking friends and/or relatives. Now we will examine whether each type of these kinds of input, viz. indirect input (television and computer (games)), close indirect contact (viz. contact with family members who know another language but who do not communicate in that language, for instance siblings learning Spanish) and finally close direct contact (meaning a person has actually interacted in English with other people, for instance during holidays abroad) can be linked to specific test scores. Presumably, close direct contact will be mostly associated with high scores on the language tests.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Preference for English-spoken programmes</th>
<th>Preference for Dutch-spoken programmes</th>
<th>undecided</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strong group (20)</td>
<td>18 (90%)</td>
<td>2 (10%)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle group (51)</td>
<td>22 (43.1%)</td>
<td>28 (54.9%)</td>
<td>1 (2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weak group (36)</td>
<td>13 (36.1%)</td>
<td>22 (61.1%)</td>
<td>1 (2.8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total (107)</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 14: repartition of the three groups over their preference for English or Dutch-spoken T.V.-programmes

If we consider the amount of time spent watching television by the strong and weak groups, we see that in both groups there are participants who watch a lot of television and others who do not. In the strong group however, the elevated numbers are more salient than in the weak group, viz. 35, 42, 49 versus 38, 56. Likewise, the minimum time spent on watching television among the participants from the strong group is six hours (participant 30) while this is one hour among those from the weak group (participant 79). On average, the strong group watches television 16.8 hours a week, the weak group 10.9 hours. This shows that there indeed could be established a link between television habits and English proficiency. However, this correlation loses its possible validity if we also consider the middle group, who watches television on average 10.4 hours a week, so even less than the weak group.

Another hypothesis is that the proficiency in English could be linked to the nature of the television programmes that are watched, viz. whether they are English-spoken or Dutch-spoken. Table 14 shows that the members of the strong group display a greater preference for English-spoken television programmes (eighteen out of twenty) whereas in the weak group, twenty two children out of thirty six clearly choose Dutch-spoken television programmes. The middle group is nearly equally divided with respect to their preference of the programmes. Despite the exceptions, for instance the two participants of the strong group who do prefer Dutch programmes, the numbers suggest that it is indeed possible to
establish a correlation between the language of the television programmes that are commonly watched and the proficiency in that specific language.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Preference for English computer activities</th>
<th>Preference for Dutch computer activities</th>
<th>undecided</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strong group (20)</td>
<td>6 (30%)</td>
<td>4 (20%)</td>
<td>10 (50%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle group (51)</td>
<td>10 (19.6%)</td>
<td>17 (33.4%)</td>
<td>24 (47%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weak group (36)</td>
<td>6 (16.7%)</td>
<td>13 (36.1%)</td>
<td>17 (47.2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total (107)</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 15: Repartition of the three groups over their preference for English or Dutch computer activities

As to the computer habits, a link between those and English proficiency can also be established. The strong group on average uses the computer 10.3 hours a week, the middle group 5.3 hours and the weak group 4.1 hours. Obviously there are exceptions remain, for instance ‘weak’ participant 35 who uses the computer 17.5 hours a week and ‘strong’ participant 61 who use the computer 1 hour a week. Considering the participants’ preference for either English or Dutch computer activities, represented in table 14, we can see that there is a slight decline as to English computer activities and a slight incline as to Dutch computer activities, from the strong towards the weak group. These results thus show that engaging in English computer activities may enhance proficiency in the target language.

Up until now we have seen that having indirect contact with English, specifically via television and computer activities, may have a positive influence on one’s English proficiency. Yet, it remains more likely that those students who have already had direct contact with the language, viz. they have already interacted with it, and those participants who sometimes hear the language by family members or friends, will have a more thorough lexical knowledge of English. In a preliminary research about the receptive vocabulary knowledge of English among children in primary school (Dermul, 2008: 55), the two participants who obtained the highest scores on the vocabularies tests were the only ones to have had direct contact with English in the near past, the former while travelling in English-speaking countries such as Great Britain and Malaysia where English is the lingua franca, and the latter in Turkey during the summer holidays where English was the language of communication in his hotel. We will now examine whether a similar conclusion can be drawn from the present data. Table 16 represents the repartition of the three groups, i.e. the strong, middle and weak groups, over their nature of contact with English, i.e. close direct, close indirect or indirect contact.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Close direct</th>
<th>Close indirect</th>
<th>Indirect</th>
<th>None</th>
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</thead>
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<td>Strong group (20)</td>
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<td>1 (5%)</td>
<td>10 (50%)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Middle group (51)</td>
<td>10 (19.6%)</td>
<td>4 (7.8%)</td>
<td>36 (70.6%)</td>
<td>1 (2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weak group (36)</td>
<td>4 (11.2%)</td>
<td>2 (5.5%)</td>
<td>28 (77.8%)</td>
<td>2 (5.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total (107)</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 16: Repartition of the three groups over their nature of contact with English

Again, we can see a decline as to direct contact and an incline as to indirect contact when we move from the strong towards the weak groups, which suggests that interaction in English has a beneficial effect on the proficiency in the language. However, the very fact that there are participants who have already interacted in English and have had a close and direct contact with it and nevertheless obtain low results on the tests, shows that the nature of the input in itself cannot be held responsible for one’s proficiency in a language. So there must be another mechanism or other mechanisms already present in some persons which causes them to absorb the lexical knowledge obtained from interaction with English. This mechanism could be, for instance, motivation and attitudes, as discussed above. If we look
at a combination of both factors, viz. input and motivation/attitudes, we see that in the strong group the direct and close indirect contact coincides with more positive attitudes, viz. 9, 8.3, 8, 9.3, 9.3, 8.6, 7.6, 9.6, 6.6 and 8.6 (averagely 7.9) whereas it coincides among the weak group with less positive attitudes, viz. 6.3, 5.3, 7, 8, 5.6 and 7.6 (averagely 6.6) (for a more detailed discussion, see 4.5.5.). But, the mechanisms could also be academic achievement in language subjects or the educational background of the parents, which we will discuss in the following sections.

4.5.3. Aptitude and academic achievement

<table>
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<tr>
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<th>Academic Achievement 1 (85+)</th>
<th>Academic Achievement 2 (75-85)</th>
<th>Academic Achievement 3 (-75)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<td>6 (35.3%)</td>
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<td>15 (34.9%)</td>
<td>20 (46.5%)</td>
<td>8 (17.4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weak Group (34)</td>
<td>12 (35.3%)</td>
<td>16 (47%)</td>
<td>6 (17.6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total (94)</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>20</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Table 17: Repartition of the three groups over their level of academic achievement

As mentioned above, I also wanted to find out whether there is a link between the English lexical knowledge of non-instructed learners and their general intelligence. As I could not submit the children to a traditional IQ test, I focussed on their academic achievement, i.e. how well the children perform in class. In order to study this, I obtained an overview of most children’s overall percentages and scores on various disciplines, such as French, language, mathematics, religion and WERO (a subject comprising biology, geography, history etc.). For this research, I have especially concentrated on the participants’ academic achievement in Dutch and French language skills. It is important to note that academic achievement is not the same as intelligence or language aptitude. It might for instance be possible that a person has a high IQ but fails to show this in a class context. I had expected the members of the strong group to be among the best students in class, obtaining more than 85% on every discipline and the members of the weak group to obtain rather low scores on the various class disciplines, which would mean that a link between academic achievement and language aptitude could be established. However, this hypothesis is not quite confirmed. Although the strong group contains some participants who indeed figure among the best in class, student 19 for instance is the best in his class, it also contains a relatively high number of children who obtain less than 75% on all class disciplines, among whom even a student (participant 56) who is, in terms of academic achievement, the worst of his class. Moreover, table 17 also shows that the weak group substantially comprises more participants who belong to the stronger group (with respect to academic achievement) in class than to the weaker group. The idea that obtaining high scores on the reading and listening tests would thus coincide with a strong academic achievement is thus proven invalid.

4.5.4. Educational background of the parents

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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1A/1A</th>
<th>1A/1B</th>
<th>1A/2</th>
<th>1A/3</th>
<th>1B/1B</th>
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<td>0</td>
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<td>0</td>
</tr>
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<td>Middle Group (51)</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>4</td>
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<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Weak Group (36)</td>
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<td>2</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>11</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total (107)</td>
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<td>1</td>
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<td>24</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>4</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Table 18: Repartition of the three groups over the educational background of the parents
It has been suggested that the educational background of the parents might influence one’s language development. Hence I thought it would be interesting to compare the participants’ achievement on the English tests with the educational background of their parents (see table 18). The table includes all the educational background combinations which could be detected, for instance both parents went to university education (1A/1A) or one parent went to university while the other stopped studying after secondary school (1A/2). 1A stands for university, 1B for non-university but further education, 2 for secondary education and 3 for not having finished secondary education. If participants did not know the level of education of their parents, this is indicated by the ‘-’ mark. The table immediately makes clear that no link can be established between the parents’ educational background and the participants’ scores on the tests. So it is not because one’s parents went to university or studied further after secondary school, that the children will acquire a foreign language more easily.

4.5.5. Synthesis

In conclusion, table 19 (see following page) provides the subjects’ scores on the reading and listening tests, combined with all factors influencing the language learner discussed above. When we examined every factor separately, no correlations could be detected between the respective factor and the scores on the test. As we have already seen, the examination of the combination of factors motivation/attitudes and input showed that in the strong group direct and close indirect contact coincided with more positive attitudes whereas it coincided among the weak group with less positive attitudes. However, it appears to be impossible to see any other substantial links if we consider the combination of all factors.
there are decisive factors influencing this lexical knowledge ability to recognise and understand a randomly selected set of English words. My aim was to find out to what extent ten- and eleven year old children would be able to recognise and understand a randomly selected set of English words and whether there are decisive factors influencing this lexical knowledge, such as motivation and attitudes, and whether

## Conclusion

As children in Flanders are daily confronted with English via television, radio, songs, internet etc., I assumed that even primary school children would already know quite some English. My aim was to find out to what extent ten- and eleven year old children would be able to recognise and understand a randomly selected set of English words and whether there are decisive factors influencing this lexical knowledge, such as motivation and attitudes.
towards English, the means of contact with English or language aptitude. Moreover, I wanted

to find out whether the children would be better in listening to English words than in reading
them and whether watching English-spoken television programmes influences the English
proficiency.

Language proficiency depends on attitudes towards and contact with the target
language. Therefore, I gave my participants a questionnaire which examined these issues.
The general attitudes towards English were very positive. Most participants were enthusiastic
about learning foreign languages in general and would already like to learn English. Only a
few of them thought this was too soon. I asked the children both about their attitudes towards
French and English. Generally, English was viewed more positively by the informants. Only
with regard to the importance of the languages for the future and the production of the
languages the results were similar. All this shows that English has a higher status in popular
culture.
The primary means of contact with English remains television, but the internet is also
designated as an important source of English influence. In all, twenty three participants have
already had direct contact with English.

Next I gave the children a vocabulary test via reading and via listening. The children
master a certain basic English vocabulary, for example boy, car, date, woman and to love
were known by almost all participants. Yet, there were great differences in the scores. Some
participants recognised about ninety words whereas others barely knew twenty words. So,
the size of these primary school children’s receptive vocabularies seems to depend on other
factors, i.e. factors influencing the language learner.

A more thorough analysis of the vocabulary tests showed that nouns and pronouns
are most easily acquired. L1 interference turned out to be the most common error. Generally,
most children excelled in the listening test, which suggests that primarily having contact with
English via the spoken word (television and songs) has a positive effect on English
proficiency. When analysing the correlations between the test results and the factors
influencing the language learner, it became clear that positive attitudes towards the target
language may enhance, but do not guarantee, a proficiency in the language. Correlations
between the children’s TV-habits and their scores on the tests could be established, viz.
those participants who preferred English-spoken television programmes and computer
activities to Dutch-spoken television programmes and computer activities, seemed to know
more English words. Surprisingly, a link between English proficiency and having direct
contact with the language could not be established. Finally, there also seemed to be no
correlations between the participants’ test results and their academic achievement and their
parents’ educational background.


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