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SONGS AND POEMS IN THE SECOND LANGUAGE CLASSROOM
The hidden potential of singing for developing writing fluency

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Abstract

Despite various studies on the benefits of singing on language learning, little is known about the relationship between singing and the development of second language writing skills. Given that fluency is an essential part of a language learner's writing skills, it is important to examine the effects of different pedagogical methods on its development. In addition, since teachers' beliefs influence their language teaching practice, it is beneficial to examine what beliefs teachers hold about language teaching methods. Little is known about language teachers' practice using songs and poems in their language classrooms. Due to the beneficial effects of singing on language learning, it is reasonable to investigate whether teachers use songs in language teaching.

Study 1 examined how singing, listening to songs and reciting poems or song lyrics as language teaching methods are related to the development of second language learners' writing fluency. Participants in this study were 51 language learners enrolled in two intensive Finnish language courses. The participants' language proficiency level was A2. Written stories based on cartoon strips were used as a pretest and a posttest to collect the data. Their writing fluency was analyzed based on the number of words used. The results indicate that fluency increased the most in the singing groups and the least in the listening groups. There was a statistically significant difference between the singing group and the group reciting lyrics, as well as between the group listening to songs and the group reciting lyrics.

Study 2 investigated how singing, listening to songs, and reciting poems or song lyrics as teaching methods are related to the writing fluency of Finnish learners (n=32) on language proficiency level A2.1. Additionally, it was investigated how the development of fluency is related to the students' experiences of the teaching methods used and their preferred methods of studying Finnish. In this study, fluency

was investigated by measuring the number of words, as well as number of words in T-units, correct T-units and clauses in stories written in a pre-test and a post-test. Fluency increased the most in the singing group, and the least in the reciting group. There was a statistically significant difference between the singing group and the reciting group, as well as between the reciting group and the listening group. The students in the singing group had the most positive attitudes toward their teaching method, and writing fluency increased the most in the texts of students who reported studying Finnish either by speaking or listening to it.

Study 3 examined Finnish language teachers' beliefs and practices related to singing, listening to songs, and reciting poems as teaching methods, and whether their teaching practices were congruent with their beliefs. Teachers viewed all three techniques as highly beneficial for language learning. Singing and reciting poems were considered the most suitable for teaching pronunciation, and listening to songs was considered the most suitable for introducing topics. For teachers who reported using particular techniques, their practice was supported by their beliefs. However, overall, reported teaching practices did not completely align with teachers' stated beliefs.

In total, the results of this thesis indicate that singing is a beneficial and positively viewed pedagogical method for language learning and teaching. Singing was more beneficial for developing writing fluency, measured by number of the words used, than listening to songs or reciting poems, and students considered singing to be the most positive method among the three teaching methods studied. Teachers also had highly positive beliefs about all three methods. However, they reported using them only seldom or never, listening to songs being an exception even though this method was also reportedly used seldom or occasionally.

These findings have implications for teacher training and future research. Further, the contribution of this thesis lies in combination with the theoretical knowledge of the field of second language acquisition through the use of songs, especially singing, in language classrooms. In sum, it could be argued that singing as a language teaching method takes into account not just the technical aspects of a language, but also the dispositions of the learners and how they respond to different types of input. This thesis argues that using singing more comprehensively and in a more goal driven fashion for language teaching should be recommended for language teachers.

Keywords: singing, listening to music, reciting poems, second-language acquisition, second language teaching, writing, fluency, beliefs, practice

Tiivistelmä

Laulamisen positiivisesta vaikutuksesta kielen oppimiseen on tehty useita tutkimuksia, mutta laulamisen yhteyttä kirjoittamistaitojen kehittymiseen ei ole juuri tutkittu. Kielen oppijan kirjoittamistaitoihin kuuluu olennaisena osana kirjoittamisen sujuvuus, ja siksi onkin tärkeää tarkastella myös erilaisten opetusmenetelmien yhteyttä sujuvuuden kehittymiseen. Lisäksi on tärkeää tarkastella opettajien uskomuksia erilaisista kielenopetusmenetelmistä, koska ne vaikuttavat heidän opetuksessaan tekemiinsä valintoihin. Kielenopettajien tavoista käyttää lauluja ja runoja opetuksessaan on vasta vähän tietoa, ja siksi aihetta on syytä tarkastella.

Tämän väitöskirjan osatutkimus I tarkasteli laulamisen, laulujen kuuntelun ja runojen tai laulun sanojen rytmikkään lausumisen yhteyttä toisella kielellä kirjoittamisen sujuvuuteen. Tutkimukseen osallistui 51 kielenoppijaa kahdelta suomen kielen intensiivikurssilta. Osallistujien kielitaidon taso oli A2. Tutkimusaineistona oli alku- ja loppumittauksessa kirjoitetut, sarjakuviin perustuvat tarinat, joista kirjoituksen sujuvuutta tarkasteltiin tekstien kokonaissanamäärinä. Tulokset osoittivat, että sujuvuus kehittyi eniten lauluja laulaneilla ryhmillä ja vähiten lauluja kuunnelleilla ryhmillä. Sekä lauluryhmät että lauluja kuunnelleet ryhmät erosivat laulun sanoja lausuneista ryhmistä tilastollisesti merkitsevästi.

Tutkimus II tarkasteli laulamisen, laulujen kuuntelun ja runojen tai laulun sanojen rytmikkään lausumisen yhteyttä A2.1-tasoisten kielenoppijoiden (n = 32) kirjoittamisen sujuvuuteen. Lisäksi opiskelijoiden kokemuksia käytetyistä opetusmenetelmistä sekä heidän raportoimiaan suomen kielen oppimistapoja verrattiin sujuvuuden kehittymiseen. Sujuvuutta tarkasteltiin sekä tekstien kokonaissanamäärinä että T-yksiköiden, korrektien T-yksiköiden ja lauseiden sanamäärinä. Aineistona käytettiin alku- ja loppumittauksessa kirjoitettuja tarinoita. Sujuvuus kehittyi eniten lauluryhmillä ja vähiten laulun sanoja lausuneilla ryhmillä. Sekä lauluryhmät

että lauluja kuunnelleet ryhmät erosivat laulun sanoja lausuneista ryhmistä tilastollisesti merkitsevästi. Lauluryhmiin osallistuneiden opiskelijoiden mielipiteet käytetyistä opetusmenetelmistä olivat myönteisimmät, ja sujuvuus kasvoi eniten opiskelijoilla, jotka kertoivat opiskelevansa suomea mieluiten puhumalla tai kuuntelemalla.

Tutkimuksessa III tarkasteltiin opettajien uskomuksia ja heidän kertomiaan käytänteitä laulamisen, laulujen kuuntelun ja runojen lausumisen käytöstä kielen opetuksessa. Lisäksi tarkasteltiin, olivatko opettajien uskomukset yhtenäisiä heidän kuvaamiensa opetuskäytänteiden kanssa. Opettajien mielestä kaikki kolme opetusmenetelmää olivat erittäin hyödyllisiä kielen oppimisessa. Laulamista ja runojen lausumista pidettiin hyödyllisimpänä ääntämisen opettamisessa ja laulujen kuuntelua uusien aiheiden esittelyssä. Menetelmiä käyttäneiden opettajien uskomukset olivat yhtenäisiä heidän käytänteidensä kanssa, mutta kaiken kaikkiaan opettajien kertomat käytänteet eivät olleet täysin samansuuntaisia heidän uskomustensa kanssa.

Tämän väitöskirjan tulokset osoittavat, että laulaminen on hyödyllinen ja myönteiseksi koettu kielenopetus- ja oppimismenetelmä. Kun kirjoituksen sujuvuuden kehittymistä tarkasteltiin tekstin sanojen kokonaismäärinä, laulaminen oli oppimisen kannalta hyödyllisempää kuin laulujen kuuntelu tai laulun sanojen rytmikäs lausuminen. Opiskelijat suhtautuivat laulamiseen muita menetelmiä myönteisemmin, ja opettajat pitivät kaikkia kolmea tutkittua opetusmenetelmää erittäin hyödyllisinä. Opettajat kertoivat kuitenkin käyttävänsä kyseisiä menetelmiä harvoin: laulujen kuuntelua käytettiin hieman muita menetelmiä useammin mutta kuitenkin vain satunnaisesti.

Tutkimuksen tuloksia voi soveltaa sekä opettajankoulutuksessa että tulevassa tutkimuksessa. Tämä väitöskirja yhdistää toisen kielen oppimista koskevan teoreettisen tiedon laulujen kielenopetuskäyttöön. Yhteenvetona voi todeta, että laulaminen kielenopetusmenetelmänä huomioi kielen piirteiden opettamisen lisäksi oppijan kokonaisvaltaisemmin. Tämän väitöskirjan perusteella kielenopettajille voi suositella laulamisen monipuolisempaa ja tavoitteellisempaa käyttöä kielenopetuksessa.

Asiasanat: laulaminen, musiikin kuuntelu, runojen lausuminen, toisen kielen oppiminen, toisen kielen opettaminen, kirjoittaminen, sujuvuus, uskomukset, käytänteet

Contents

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List of original publications

This doctoral thesis is based on the following three studies reported in three original articles. The studies are referred to in the text by their Roman numerals:

Study I   Alisaari, J., & Heikkola, L. M. (2016). Increasing fluency in L2 writing with singing. *Studies in Second Language Learning and Teaching*, *6*(2), 271–292.

Study II   Alisaari, J., & Heikkola, L. M. (2016). Laulamalla sujuvuutta suomenoppijoiden kirjoittamiseen [Increasing fluency in Finnish learners' writing with singing]. *Kasvatus*, *47*(4), 313–326.

Study III Alisaari, J., & Heikkola, L. M. Songs and poems in the language classroom (under review). Submitted to *Teaching and Teacher Education.*

1.   Introduction

In this thesis, the aim is to investigate how singing, listening to songs and reciting song lyrics or poems affect the development of writing fluency and what kinds of beliefs and reported practices Finnish language teachers have concerning these three methods. Writing proficiency, including knowledge of vocabulary, structures and genres, is an important part of language proficiency (Wolfe-Quintero, Inagaki, & Kim, 1998). Additionally, writing is a necessary component of a second language (L2) student's skills in the target language if the student is going to use his or her L2 for studying, applying for a job or working in many fields. In a student's life, writing is an important part of learning academic content, as well as a component of academic success: Taking notes, doing homework, writing reports and essays and answering test questions all require writing skills. If writing is not fluent, all these tasks will require an enormous amount of time, may cause stress related to studying and can reduce school success. When language learners' proficiency increases, they require less time to complete writing tasks (Wolfe-Quintero et al., 1998). Thus, developing writing fluency is needed. However, for second language learners, writing is often the most difficult skill to learn. Writing skills develop more slowly than speaking skills (e.g., Pajunen, 2012); thus, they require special attention in learning contexts. Because second language learners often struggle with academic writing, developing methods to enhance writing skills is crucial, for example, to help migrant students study successfully.

The impetus for the research came from attempts to address the writing challenges of my students in my role as a Finnish as a second language teacher. For example, one former student, a 10-years-old girl with a home language other than the language of schooling (i.e., Finnish), needed several hours to accomplish her daily homework since she was struggling with her writing skills. Obviously, something needed to be done both to decrease the amount of homework and to develop the girl's writing skills. To respond to her needs, I spent an extra hour per week with her singing and playing music to develop her language skills in general. During the school year, there was noticeable improvement in the girl's general language skills and in her writing skills in particular, as well as in her self-esteem. Naturally, the girls' skills developed not only because of the music and singing intervention, but this was the starting point for my interest in researching singing as a language teaching method and its relationship to writing fluency.

In this thesis, language learning is considered partly from a foreign language perspective and partly from a second language learning perspective. According to

Larsen-Freeman and Long (1991), the term *second language learning* is often used to refer to language learning that takes part in an environment where the target language is spoken natively and is the language of schooling. *Foreign* or *additional language learning* is instead used to refer to language learning that is manifested mainly in classrooms. However, the term *second language learning* could also be used to refer to both of these situations. Further, the word *second* does not refer merely to an absolute order of languages that a learner is learning, but can refer to any subsequent language that is learned after the mother tongue(s) or first language(s). Thus, the term *second language learning* could be used to refer any kind of language learning that occurs after the acquisition of one's first language(s). (Larsen-Freeman & Long, 1991.) This is how the term is used in this thesis.

The term *learning* needs a definition, as well. In second language studies, *learning* is sometimes used to refer only to formal and conscious learning taking place in language classrooms and is distinguished from *acquisition*, which refers to more informal learning occurring mainly outside the classroom, often subconsciously or through submersion. However, both terms can also be used synonymously as is done in this thesis. (Ellis, 2008.)

In this thesis, second language acquisition is examined from two perspectives. The first focus is the development of writing fluency and its relationship to singing, listening to songs, or reciting poems or song lyrics as language teaching methods. The second is Finnish language teachers' beliefs and reported practice related to these three teaching methods.

In the field of second language acquisition (SLA) research, fluency of language use has gained considerable attention. Fluency is a crucial aspect of speaking or writing. Further, it has been found that the more language knowledge language users have (i.e., the more fluently, for example, writers produce texts), the more capacity they have for other working memory tasks. (Chenoweth & Hayes, 2001; Schoonen et al., 2003.) At the same time, mainly in the field of psychology, studies argue that singing or listening to songs has a positive influence on recall (Schön et al., 2008). More generally, studies argue for the positive effects of singing on language learning (e.g., Engh, 2013). However, only a few studies exist on using singing or music in a language classroom context outside laboratory settings (Sposet, 2008). Moreover, in studies concerning the benefits of singing on language learning, the relationship of singing and writing skills is not specifically examined. Furthermore, the use of poems in language learning is an area of research in which there is little, if any, information. The few related studies focus mainly on teachers' reports of using poems for teaching pronunciation (e.g., Burgess & Spencer, 2000). Since reciting

poems has many of the same elements as singing (i.e., rhythmical production of a text), it is useful to include this practice in studies related to the use of songs in language classrooms. Thus, this study provides new insights into the field of SLA research by studying the relationship between singing, listening to songs or reciting poems or song lyrics as teaching methods for developing of writing fluency.

In studies related to SLA, language teachers' beliefs about language learning or teaching and the relationship between teachers' beliefs and their language classroom practices are widely studied (e.g., Barcelos & Kalaja, 2011). However, little is known about teachers' beliefs or practices related to singing, listening to songs or reciting poems in language teaching. Since teachers' beliefs affect their classroom practices (Barcelos, 2003), it is worth studying what beliefs teachers hold concerning the aforementioned teaching methods. Moreover, since the benefits of music or singing for learning, and, in particular, language learning are known, there is a need for studies on how songs can be implemented in language classrooms. This thesis seeks to answer this need. Along with Finnish language teachers' beliefs and practices concerning the use of singing and listening to songs as teaching methods in language classrooms, this thesis examines the use of poems in language teaching.

2. Second language acquisition: From input and output to affordances and affect

SLA is an active, conscious, psychological and social process (Ellis, 2008; van Lier, 1998). In this chapter, SLA is first looked at from a cognitive perspective, and factors such as receiving and producing language, as well as the role of learners' attention toward linguistic features (noticing language) are discussed. Then, the focus is placed on an ecological perspective of language learning and on affordances that emphasize a more active role for the learner within the social environment. Finally, the psychological perspective of language learning and affects related to the language learning process are discussed.

Social interaction plays an important role in language learning (van Lier, 2000), but comprehensible input is also essential (Krashen, 1982/2009). According to Gass and Mackey (2006), 'input refers to language that is available to the learner through any medium (listening, reading, or gestural in the case of sign language)' and it is 'a basic component in the acquisition process' (p. 5). Krashen's (1982/2009) input hypothesis proposes that second language acquisition occurs when a learner receives enough understandable input that is slightly more difficult than his or her current language level, what Krashen referred to as i+1. If the input is modified to be more comprehensible, language acquisition is more likely to occur (Krashen, 1982/2009). Krashen's idea of i+1 is related to Vygotsky's (1962/1986) zone of proximal development (ZPD): When a learner is supported on slightly more advanced level than his or her current skill level, development and learning will be the most efficient.

Not all input available to learners is absorbed, that is, noticed, paid attention to and learned (Corder, 1967). According to Schmidt (1990), a learner's attention level plays a crucial role in selecting the language features to be learned, and this is how noticed input becomes absorbed. Furthermore, Swain (2000) argues that input or even intake alone is not enough: Producing output – the uttered language – is crucial for SLA. Producing output enables a learner to practice the language and pay attention to vocabulary, forms and structures. Further, it helps the learner to automatize specific forms and expressions in the target language (Swain, 2000). As Swain (2000) puts it, for output, learners have to be active in producing the language.

Output promotes 'noticing' the target language (Swain, 2000, p. 99). Schmidt's (1990, 2010) noticing hypothesis suggests that attention plays a crucial role in SLA: To learn the features of a target language, a second language learner has to notice them, and in this way input becomes intake (Schmidt, 2010). When the noticed

language feature has been sufficiently rehearsed, it is encoded into long-term memory (Robinson, Mackey, Gass, & Schmidt, 2014). If language learners consider the available input appropriate for their language development, their knowledge of the target language is developing, and they are integrating new knowledge into their existing knowledge (Gass, 1988). Through practice and repetition, linguistic patterns become memorized and more rapidly available for memory retrieval (Robinson, 1995). This enhances the fluency of language production (see chapter 2.2 on fluency).

Van Lier (2000), who promotes an ecological approach to language learning, has criticized the use of the concepts of input and output as limiting the second language learning process by making it independent of social context. He developed the concept of *affordance* to refer to the linguistic materials that are available in the learning environment. These affordances have to be noticed by the learner and paid attention to. Learning occurs when a learner is engaged with the learning setting and actively controlling his or her participation in it (Lantolf, 2000). Thus, learning does not take place only during lessons or a school day, but everywhere and all the time. Songs, for example, are available as learning material wherever and whenever a language learner decides to listen to or sing them.

In the language acquisition process, psychological factors also play an important role. Among those, affects related to learning and learning situations should be considered natural parts of language learning and language classrooms (Ellis, 2008). With regards to such affects, only anxiety is discussed in this paper. Anxiety that language learning may cause has generated considerable discussion in the field of SLA research. Anxiety has different influences on different learners, and it is not agreed whether anxiety facilitates or hinders language learning (see Ellis, 2008 for a review). Generally, anxiety is considered to have a negative effect on second language learning (see MacIntyre & Gardner, 1991, for another review of various studies). For example, it increases the amount of time students spend accomplishing their tasks and tests, and at the same time, it decreases their level of outcome. Moreover, anxiety distracts both perception of input and production of output, not to mention information processing (i.e., learning). (MacIntyre, 1998.) This is caused by language anxiety's competition 'for cognitive resources with normal cognitive demands' (MacIntyre, 1998, p. 35). Anxiety mainly arises during speaking and listening activities in a language classroom, primarily when speaking aloud in front of a class (Horwitz et al., 1986; Philips, 1992; Woodrow, 2006).

Krashen's (1982/2009) affective filter hypothesis proposes that anxiety associated with language learning can hinder learning. If learners' affective filter is

low (i.e., they do not consider an L2 acquisition situation to cause anxiety), a situation is beneficial for language leaning. According to Krashen (1982/2009), the affective filter is low if the emphasis is on the meaning and not on the form of language, and if a language learner is interested in the topic and understands the content of the input. Krashen (1982/2009) argues that 'a desirable goal is that the student "forget[s]", in a sense, that the message is actually coded in another language' (p. 74).

Van Lier (2004), among others, has strongly criticized the affective filter hypothesis as an over-simplified view of language learners as passive receivers. Moreover, van Lier (2004) argues that anxiety, along with other aspects of the learning situation, is complex, not simply a positive or negative learning factor. However, since strong evidence supports the notion that anxiety hinders language learning (MacIntyre & Gardner, 1991), it is rational to consider the possibilities for lowering the anxiety level of learners. Anxiety can be reduced by creating a supportive classroom community (Phillips, 1998) and offering more scaffolding, meaning support for learners, during performance of language tasks (Lee, 1998). Scaffolding can be done, for example, by using illustrations and gestures during listening comprehension activities (Vogely, 1998). Further, anxiety can also be reduced by enabling learners to gain more control over their L2 learning and focusing on meaning instead of form in L2 activities (VanPatten & Glass, 1998).

In this thesis, input (i.e., affordances) and output are considered to be provided through song lyrics and poems that learners listen to and/or produce. When lyrics and poems are produced, learners are paying active attention to language. At the same time, the positive atmosphere that singing, listening to songs or reciting poems can create in a language classroom can lower learners' anxiety level. These issues are further discussed in chapter 3.3.

2.1   Learning vocabulary, pronunciation and writing in a second language

Second language learning includes various aspects that are important in the holistic process of language acquisition. This thesis focuses on the learning of pronunciation, vocabulary and writing since these are key areas for academic progress. For communicative competence, good pronunciation skills are needed (Lord, 2005; Morley, 1991); good vocabulary skills are essential in school success (Verhallen & Schoonen, 1998), in addition to writing skills without which academic studying is impossible. Pronunciation, vocabulary and writing are also the three main aspects of the three studies in this thesis. The first two of three studies of this thesis investigate how singing, listening to songs and reciting song lyrics as teaching methods are related to the development of writing fluency. In the third study, pronunciation and

vocabulary are the main features that teachers consider to be positively influenced by singing, listening to songs and reciting song lyrics.

In this chapter, first, research and theories related to the learning of pronunciation and vocabulary are briefly presented. Then, second language writing, in particular the three dimensions of complexity, accuracy and especially fluency are discussed.

Pronunciation is a combination of segmental (phonemes, i.e., sounds), as well as suprasegmental factors, intonation, rhythm and vocal stress (Lintunen, 2014). Good pronunciation is a component of good communication skills and effective language use (Morley, 1991). Lintunen (2014) argues that people can be easily judged incompetent language users if their pronunciation skills are not sufficient. Thus, the teaching of pronunciation is crucial in language classrooms. Relatively few studies focus on teaching and learning pronunciation (Derwing & Munro, 2005; Lord, 2005) but there is some understanding of how pronunciation should be effectively taught. The main consideration when teaching pronunciation is creating a supportive and pleasant classroom atmosphere: It is essential for students to be able to practice pronunciation without feeling uncomfortable (Morley, 1991).

According to Derwing and Munro (2005), to acquire the most beneficial results, pronunciation should be explicitly taught. In practice, pronunciation is usually either integrated into teaching or separately focused on during language lessons (Burgess & Spencer, 2000). Burgess and Spencer (2000) argue that the best practice would be to integrate the teaching of pronunciation into the teaching of communication skills and the perception and production of language. However, Lord (2005) showed that, when students are explicitly observing and analysing their own pronunciation outcomes, their skill development is more evident.

In learning pronunciation, the goal is not to learn a 'perfect' or a 'native-like' accent and pronunciation, but to learn how to pronounce the language so that it will be understood and thus serve the speaker's communicative purposes (Morley, 1991). It is possible to achieve a native-like accent, even when L2 learning is started after early childhood; however, it requires strong learner motivation, as well as input and instruction (Bongaerts, Mennen & van der Slik, 2000).

Pronunciation skills can be practiced by listening to a language (Mendelson-Burns, 1987): Different kinds of listening tasks are beneficial for practicing pronunciation since they enhance auditory perception (Morley, 1991). Pronunciation can also be practiced, for example, by reading poems, role-playing and singing songs with the aim of making pronunciation patterns more fluent (Morley, 1991). Rhythmic clapping, tone humming, singing and reciting poems are viewed as

particularly beneficial when teaching suprasegmental features, defined as language intonation, rhythm, and vocal stress – the features that are usually considered most difficult in pronunciation (Burgess & Spencer, 2000). Kendrick (1997) demonstrated that listeners of L2 speakers rate skill with suprasegmental features to be highly important; thus, they are worth practicing in language classrooms. Speech rhythm and word stress exercises are valuable for practicing the rhythm and intelligibility of pronunciation, and drama and role-play activities are valuable for practicing intonation and stress (Kendrick, 1997). In actual English language teaching practice, Burgess and Spencer (2000) found that chanting is the most common method for teaching pronunciation, but drama, role-play and pronunciation drills are used, as well. Overall, Kendrick (1997) found that the most important condition for developing pronunciation skills is encouraging students to produce the spoken language as much as possible. This could be done, for example, by singing.

Along with pronunciation skills, vocabulary is a main component of a language user's language knowledge since without sufficient words communication is challenging (Hulstijn, 2010). Because sufficient lexical skills are necessary for school success (Verhallen & Schoonen, 1998), it is crucial to consider useful methods for increasing the vocabulary of second language learners. Vocabulary can be learned by recognizing both the written and the spoken forms of words (Nation, 2001). However, learning a word also includes learning its collocations, synonyms, opposites and meaning relations (Nation, 2001; Verhallen & Schoonen, 1998).

There are two dimensions of vocabulary knowledge: receptive and productive. *Receptive* vocabulary includes known forms and meanings of words that are recognized and understood within or without their contexts. *Productive* vocabulary comprises the words learners can actually produce and use spontaneously. Overall, knowing a word also includes the ability to connect a word form to its meaning. (Nation, 2001.) DeKeyser and Sokalski (1996) studied Spanish as a second language learning and demonstrated that practice is needed for both receptive and productive learning of words: input practice for receptive knowledge and output practice for productive knowledge. Thus, input alone is not sufficient for students to learn to produce words. (DeKeyser & Sokalski, 1996). However, receptive learning requires less time than productive (Nation, 2001).

Honko (2013) studied the development of Finnish language learners' lexicons and found that their opportunities for using the target language are related to the development of their vocabulary skills: Practicing the language in different situations is essential for increasing one's lexicon. Reading supports the development of vocabulary skills, as well (Nagy & Anderson 1984). Additionally,

learners' ability to keep a word in their phonological short-term memory crucially affects their vocabulary learning (Gathercole & Baddeley, 1989). Development of written vocabulary and especially the spelling of written words may be improved, for example, by practicing different kinds of rhyming activities (Nation, 2001). Vocabulary skills also reflect the fluency of second language production (Chenoweth & Hayes, 2001), which is discussed in the following chapter.

2.2   Fluency in second language writing

In the following chapter, second language writing, especially fluency as a dimension of writing, is discussed in the following order. The discussion first describes how second language writing skills are related to writing skills in one's native language. Second, dimensions of writing, complexity, accuracy and especially fluency, are discussed. Third, measurements of fluency are discussed first from a more general perspective and then from a perspective of Finnish language. Finally, at the end of the chapter, the measurements used in this thesis to investigate the development of writing fluency are presented.

Native language writing skills affect the development of L2 writing skills (Kroll, 1990). For example, writing strategies and, to some extent, knowledge of text structures and genres in L1 can be transferred to L2 writing (see also Friedlander, 1990). Thus, good L2 writing skills generally require good writing skills in L1 (Cummins, 1981). However, in many aspects, second language writing differs from writing in one's native language (Grabe, 2001) due to writers' limited knowledge of the vocabulary and structures of the target language (Wigglesworth & Storch, 2012). When language learners acquire more knowledge of a target language, their language production becomes more fluent, which is reflected in the writing process, as well (Chenoweth & Hayes 2001; Williams 2012).

Second language acquisition research often examines how the three dimensions of writing – complexity, accuracy and fluency (CAF) – develop over a period of time. Aspects of complexity, accuracy and fluency are used to describe language learners' proficiency or performance, both in spoken and written language, or to measure the development of their language skills (Housen & Kuiken, 2009). In this study, the focus is only on the development of writing fluency, so it is important to distinguish writing fluency from the concepts of complexity and accuracy.

Complexity is often used to refer to variation in sophistication of language (Ellis, 2003). It can be measured quantitatively, for example, as syntactic or morphological complexity, measured by subordination ratio, the mean length of utterances (words

per T-unit[1] or words per clause) or verb inflections per verbs (Bulté & Housen, 2012). *Accuracy* is the appropriateness and acceptability or correctness of a language learner's production compared with the norms and manners of target language (Housen, Kuiken & Vedder, 2012).

Fluency is a much more complicated concept, and it has been described in different ways in a variety of contexts, both international and Finnish. Fluency is often associated with oral production and reading, but it is also applicable to writing. If fluency is examined from the point of view of language processing, it is often regarded as a language user's ability to produce automatized phrases, vocabulary and structures with only minor conscious attention to the language produced (Segalowitz, 2000; Schmidt, 1992) or to produce speech at a normal speed without interruptions (Skehan, 2009, p. 510).

A language user's development of fluency is affected by his or her knowledge of the target language. Fluency increases when the language learner remembers more phrases and vocabulary and has greater grammatical understanding of a target language (Ellis, 1996; Chenoweth & Hayes, 2001, p. 89; Williams, 2012, p. 322). Thus, to develop fluency, a language learner has to practice and adopt the phrases, vocabulary and structures of the target language and increase his or her knowledge of the language (Chenoweth & Hayes, 2001, p. 89; Williams, 2012, p. 322). Fluency reflects effortless use of the linguistic resources in language user's memory (Chenoweth & Hayes, 2001, p. 84). The more automatic the processing of the language becomes, the more fluent its production becomes (Segalowitz, 2000; Housen, Kuiken & Vedder, 2012). Thus, memory plays a remarkable role in fluency (Towell, 2012).

Palviainen, Kalaja and Mäntylä (2012) investigated Swedish and English as second languages and demonstrated that, at intermediate language levels, development of fluency is related to the development of language proficiency more generally, but this is not the case at higher levels of language proficiency. Lindgren, Spelman, Miller and Sullivan (2008) found that an increase in fluency causes an increase in proficiency and not vice versa; thus attention should be paid to methods that benefit the development of fluency. However, not all native writers are fluent; thus, this should also not be expected of all second language learners in every situation.

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[1]   A T-unit consists of a main clause and embedded or connected subordinate clauses (Hunt, 1965, p. 49). An example of a T-unit could be, for example, the following excerpt from L. M. Montgomery's *Anne of Green Gables* (1908): 'Marilla told Matthew the whole story, taking pains to impress him with a due sense of the enormity of Anne's behavior.'

The fluency of language production is often measured as the time, hesitations, corrections and reformulations needed to produce the language, either spoken or written (Housen et al., 2012). In Studies 1 and 2 of this thesis, the focus is on the development of writing fluency of the produced language, that is, the outcome. Features that are often examined when assessing writing fluency include either the length of text produced (Fathman & Whalley, 1990, p. 185; Reid, 1990, p. 195) or how much text is produced in a certain amount of time (Chenoweth & Hayes, 2001, p. 84; Skehan, 2009, p. 511). Based on a meta-analysis of several studies, Wolfe-Quintero, Inagaki and Kim (1998) have described writing fluency as the number of the words in a text, as well as number of the words in T-units, correct T-units and clauses. Hunt (1965) argues that looking at T-units reveals more about the development of writing than the mere examination of sentences.

Looking at the Finnish language, an increase in the number of words could be a signal of the development of writing skills more generally (Pajunen, 2012). However, fluency in written Finnish has been examined from different points of views. Martin, Mustonen, Reiman and Seilonen (2010) consider the number of words in a written text to be a general measure of fluency; however, they argue that the frequency of different grammatical structures (their manifestation per 1000 words) also reflects fluency. Kajander (2013) determined that an increase in the complexity of existential structures shows an increase in fluency. However, compared with international literature on determinants of fluency, these aforementioned conclusions about frequency and complexity reflect more language complexity than fluency. That is, they represent variations in language use more than production of automatized phrases with only minor attention (see also Segalowitz, 2000; Schmidt, 1992). According to Ellis (2003) and Housen et al. (2012), fluency is more related to a learner's ability to control his or her L2 knowledge and produce the language without hesitations, pauses or reformulations or, as Lennon (1990) argues, with native-like speed. In addition, fluency increases when the learner attains more control over the learned structures (Housen et al., 2012).

In some studies, the number of corrections made to a written text has also been used as a measure of fluency (Knoch, 2007). On the other hand, it has also been argued that corrections may not be related to writing fluency (Abdel Latif, 2012) or to its development (Alisaari & Heikkola, 2014). A fluent language user may rewrite words or even parts of a text while rethinking and reformulating his or her expression, just as native speakers do.

The measures used to examine the fluency of writing and written outcomes – the absolute number of the words, the number of words in T-units and correct

T-units and clauses – have been developed to investigate fluency in texts written in English; thus, use of these measures for the Finnish language is not necessarily without problems. Further, some researchers argue that the number of words in clauses and T-units reflects the complexity of the language more than fluency per se (Bulté & Housen, 2012; Martin, 2013). However, in this paper, writing fluency is measured as the absolute number of words, as well as the number of words in T-units, correct T-units and clauses. This is because Wolfe-Quintero and others (1998) argue that the length of a text is a primary measure of fluency, and according to their meta-analysis of the most reliable fluency measures, these measures are most strongly connected to the development of writing fluency. The length of a written text may also partially reflect the vocabulary of the writer: Writers who have a narrow lexicon tend to write shorter texts (Honko, 2013). Vocabulary skills also reflect the development of fluency (Chenoweth & Hayes, 2001), supporting the use of text length as a measure of fluency (see also Wolfe-Quintero et al., 1998). In conclusion, in this thesis, fluency is defined as the absolute number of the words and as the number of words in T-units, correct T-units and clauses (see Wolfe-Quintero et al., 1998).

3. Songs and poems in language learning

This chapter focuses on studies related to the use of songs and poems to benefit learning and, in particular, language learning. Songs and poems have been used in language teaching for many years. In the 1970s, Hurwitz, Wolff, Bortnick and Kokás (1975) found that musical practices had a positive impact on children's literacy skills. In the United States, already in the 1980s, guidelines were published on using singing in language classrooms (James, 1985). In recent years, a growing number of studies have indicated that music and singing enhance language learning (e.g., Abbott, 2002; Legg, 2009). Additional positive effects of music have been demonstrated by other studies. For example, according to Bilhartz, Bruhn and Olson (2000), regular musical rehearsals positively impact children's cognitive skills, in particular their abstract reasoning abilities. Moreover, singing positively affects learners' task performance due to the positive and relaxed mood it creates (Hallam, Price & Katsarou, 2002).

Music can likewise be used to create a relaxed and enjoyable atmosphere in the language class (Jolly, 1975). Music arouses sensations and feelings, which may in an appropriate context result in emotions (Sloboda, 2005); emotions, in turn, impact learning and achievement (Pekrun, Goetz, Titz & Perry, 2002). Singing has been demonstrated to enhance relaxation, raise energy levels and bring joy. These effects might be due to the increased amount of oxytocin produced in the brain during singing. (Grape, Sandgren, Hansson, Ericson & Theorell, 2003; Huron, 2006.) Using songs in the classroom is also likely to positively affect group dynamics (Lake, 2002) since singing increases learners' sense of togetherness (Spychiger, Patry, Lauper, Simmermann & Weber, 1995; Wiltermuth & Heath, 2009) and helpfulness toward each other (Kircshner & Tomasello, 2010).

In the following chapters, first, findings from previous research will be presented concerning the benefits that music and especially singing have on language learning. Second, findings from previous studies related to the use of songs in language classrooms will be considered. Third, the implications of SLA research on the use of songs in language classrooms will be discussed. These implications are central to the topic of this thesis, and they also provide new insights for the field of SLA research.

3.1 Effects of music on language acquisition

In a language classroom, songs can be used from the earliest phases of language learning (Domoney & Harris, 1993). Even though learners may not be able to sing all the words of a song, they can hum along or just listen (Lems, 2005). At the beginners'

level, students may first sing a song's chorus and then gradually broaden their participation (Lake, 2002, p. 100). Using singing or listening to songs for teaching a new language has been found to affect not merely language learners' development of linguistic skills, but also their motivation and confidence: Learning a new language with the help of listening to music or singing can be highly motivating and enjoyable (Green, 1993; Kao & Oxford, 2014; Mizener, 2008; Schön et al., 2008), and using music for language learning can support learners' confidence (Kao & Oxford, 2014).

Using songs also enhances the level of attention that a language learner pays to the target language. Schön and others (2008) argue that this may be due to songs' emotional aspects and also their pitch. They suggest that words are more easily distinguished and learned from a sung text than a spoken text: Phonological discrimination, a prerequisite for interpreting and understanding spoken words, benefits from the change of pitch that is often present when a syllable changes. Thus, especially in the early phase of language learning, songs are highly beneficial for language acquisition. (Schön, et al. 2008.)

Using songs, chants (rhythmically recited words and phrases) or poems, learners can practice pronunciation or speech patterns and increase their oral fluency (Lems, 2005; Morley, 1991). Burgess and Spencer (2000) point out that 'clapping a rhythm or humming a tone' are efficient methods for overtly practicing the suprasegmental features (e.g., length, stress and tone) of pronunciation in a target language (p. 205). Studies investigating the use of songs, chants or poems in the language classroom have primarily demonstrated that teachers use them to teach pronunciation (e.g., Breitkreutz, Derwing & Rossiter, 2001; Burgess & Spencer, 2000; Hismanoglu & Hismanoglu, 2010). Also, many studies have shown that musical training benefits the acquisition of pronunciation skills in a target language. Both adults and children with musical aptitude have been found to have better pronunciation skills in a second language than non-musical persons, which suggests that musical and linguistic skills are related (Milovanov, Huotilainen, Välimäki, Esquef & Tervaniemi, 2008; Milovanov, Pietilä, Tervaniemi & Esquef, 2010).

Musical ability is also related to phonemic ability and reading: Anvari, Trainor, Woodside and Levy (2002) found that music perception skills correlate with phonological awareness and predict reading skills. Musical training, especially long-term training, facilitates language processing and thus improves language and literacy skills more generally (Magne, Schön & Besson, 2006; Overy, 2003; Register, 2001; Standley & Hughes, 1997; Wong, Skoe, Russo, Dees & Kraus, 2007). Songs are also relevant in practicing academic or content-specific languages and thus in developing learners' academic language skills (Zwiers, 2006).

The use of songs or chants allows learners to practice communication more generally in the target language (Murphy, 1991). First, singing together provides learners with more opportunities to practice producing the target language. Second, understanding and singing songs, as well as chanting or reciting poems, can be seen as discourse skills (Cameron, 2003). In fact, as Frick (2013) has shown, sometimes songs, parts of the songs or spontaneously self-created melodies and lyrics compose natural parts of conversations to express speakers' opinions or attitudes. Third, Murphey (1990) argues that the song-stuck-in-my-head phenomenon enables learners to practice a target language involuntarily, even when they do not necessarily understand the words they are singing in their minds.

Rhythm, melody and rhyme enhance a learner's ability to remember language (Graham, 1992; Palmer & Kelly, 1992). A number of studies have demonstrated that melody combined with language helps learners to memorize words more efficiently than mere linguistic input (Ludke, Ferreira & Overy, 2014; Sammler et al., 2010; Thaut, Peterson & McIntosh, 2005; Yalch, 1991). Besides the melody, the rhythm enhances vocabulary learning more than traditional ways of presenting language. As Holme (2009) has put it, due to the rhythmic nature of language, learning new words, phrases or structures can be enhanced by combining words with a rhythmic movement (stamping or even dancing) or a rhythmic recitation. Some researchers argue that rhythm is the most crucial element of musical presentation for language learning (Purnell-Webb & Speelman, 2008; Stahl, Kotz, Henseler, Turner & Geyer, 2011), while, according to other studies, melody combined with rhythm plays a more significant role in recall (Ludke et al., 2014).

A study by Ludke and others (2014) compared how singing, rhythmical speech and normal speech affected the learning of Hungarian phrases. In this study, there were 60 adult participants randomly divided into three groups for a fifteen-minute learning period: The first group heard 20 phrases in English and Hungarian as normally spoken; the second group heard them rhythmically spoken; and the third group heard them sung. After the experiment, the participants were asked to recall and reproduce the Hungarian phrases in several tests. The results indicated that singing group outperformed the two other groups in recalling and reproducing, and the difference was statistically significant ($p<.05$) in a verbatim recall test. The group that heard the phrases rhythmically spoken did not differ in recall from the group that heard them normally spoken. Thus, Ludke et al.'s (2014) research demonstrated that singing is the most efficient method for memorizing phrases in foreign language, which may be due to the melodic information that pitch provides to a language learner. Additionally, previous studies have found that pitch provides

extra prosodic information to support language recall (Peretz, Radeau & Arguin, 2004; Serafine, Crowder & Repp, 1984; Yalch, 1991). In a study by Hébert and Peretz (1997), pitch played a more crucial role than rhythm in musical recognition. Thus, according to these findings, melody seems to have a greater impact on language recall than rhythm, and vocabulary learning may be eased by using songs that are simple and repeat the same vocabulary and structures (Schön et al., 2008). Further, a memory becomes stronger when a melody is repeated (Dowling, Tillmann & Ayers, 2002).

However, if the song is too long or it is presented too fast or only few times, the impact of music on learning may be reduced (Kilgour et al., 2000). If a melody is too difficult, musical presentation may even hinder learning (Wallace 1994). As Sloboda (2005) has written, it is easier to remember the melodies that 'conform to conventional rules of tonality' (p. 179). Misleading stresses or lyrical sentence patterns may impact learning in an unwanted way; thus, songs used for language teaching should preferably have regular sentences and the stresses typically used in a conversation. Overall, if songs are used for enhancing language acquisition, they should be neither too long nor too fast, and the melody and rhythm should be moderate. In the first two studies of this thesis, children's songs and more difficult pop songs were used as language teaching materials during the intervention. In children's songs, the melodies and rhythms are typically easy; thus, this thesis argues that they are beneficial for adult language learners, as well. According to the author's experience as a language teacher, adults also eagerly sing children's songs and even prefer them compared with more difficult pop songs, for example. Pop songs are also useful because the melodies are often familiar to the students. In the next chapter, studies concerning the use of songs in language classrooms are presented.

3.2   Using songs in language classrooms

Much of the research that argues for the benefits of music or singing in language learning has been conducted in laboratories and not in actual classroom settings (e.g., Engh, 2013, for a review; Sposet, 2008). However, there are some exceptions. Legg's (2009) study investigated how singing would facilitate the learning of French words and phrases. The study was carried out in French as a foreign language classes at a comprehensive school with 56 students who were 12 to 13 years old. The same phrases and vocabulary were taught to an experimental group mainly through song and a control group through more traditional methods. The music group outperformed the control group in learning the words and phrases, and the difference between the two groups was statistically significant.

In a study by Coyle and Gómez Gracia (2014), 25 five-year-old Spanish children were learning English vocabulary through one children's song. They participated in three 30-minute lessons in which they listened to researchers sing a song seven times. The children were allowed to join in the singing, but that wasn't actively encouraged. From the song, five words ('wheels', 'wipers', 'horn', 'door' and 'bell') were chosen as learning targets. Understanding of these words' meanings was enabled through visuals and actions. The results indicated that 68% of the children learned one to five words receptively, but no productive vocabulary was developed during the intervention. (Coyle & Gómez Gracia, 2014.) However, there was no control group in the study, and visuals and actions were combined with the song; thus it cannot be explicitly determined whether the singing enabled the acquisition of the receptive vocabulary.

Earlier research (Alisaari, 2015) investigated the effect of singing rehearsal on the learning of Finnish locatives. The participants were 10 preparatory class students aged 10 to 12 years old who were at the beginning phase of their Finnish language studies. The students practiced Finnish children songs, and after a four-week period, nine of the 10 students had increased their receptive skills related to locatives. Only three children, who at the beginning of the study were already able to identify the locatives receptively, increased their productive locative knowledge. (Alisaari, 2015.) Even though in this study there was no control group, the results indicate that singing enables at least receptive learning of grammatical structures in a second language.

Medina (1990) examined the effects of music on the second language (English) vocabulary acquisition of 48 second-grade Spanish-speaking children. In the study, there were four different treatment groups: for two groups, vocabulary was taught through an oral story – one with the support of illustrations and one without; for the third group, the story was presented through singing, and illustrations were used to support understanding; for the fourth group, the story was sung without any illustrative support. The group taught with a song and illustrations learned more vocabulary than the others, though there were no statistically significant differences in the results between the groups. The group that heard an oral version of a story without a song or illustrations scored the lowest in vocabulary learning. Medina (1990) concluded from her findings that 'if music is a viable vehicle for second language acquisition to the same extent as other non-musical means, then songs can no longer be regarded as recreational devices having little instructional value' (p. 14).

3.3   Implications of SLA research for the use of songs and poems in language classrooms

In this chapter, theories and research findings from SLA studies are combined with findings on the benefits of using songs for learning, in particular, language learning. On each topic, the SLA perspective is presented first. Then, the discussion centres on how song use could be implemented to support these perspectives. At the end of the chapter, the hypotheses for the first two studies of this thesis on the use of songs and poems in language teaching are presented.

According to the ecological approach, language learning is a social, active and conscious process. Language acquisition is most likely to occur when 1) learners are able to acquire affordances in a comprehensible way, 2) they pay attention to the language and 3) they produce the language themselves (van Lier, 1998). In a situation where language learners sing together, all these aspects are present: The situation is social because there are many people participating in it at the same time, and the learners are active when they are singing (i.e., they are producing the language). Especially with children's songs, affordances can be supported by gestures and illustrated song lyrics to enhance and strengthen comprehension (Asher, 1977). Moreover, during singing, listening to songs or reciting song lyrics, a learner is able to select personally meaningful affordances from the lyrics (van Lier, 1998).

Paying attention to the language is essential for SLA (Schmidt, 1990; van Lier, 1998). The findings of Schön and others (2008) have demonstrated that songs, and especially their pitch, enhance language learners' attention level. Thus, during singing, learners pay attention to the lyrics, as well as the rhythm and the melody of the song. Singing can also be seen as a type of mediation in which the song, gestures and illustrated handouts provide support for the development of a singer's language level. The singer–learner can utilize the affordances the song provides for his or her zone of proximal development (see also Lantolf, 2014; Vygotsky, 1962/1986). At the same time, gestures or handouts with some marking system could increase the salience of the linguistic features that learners are intended to notice. For example, if 'stomach' is mentioned in the song lyrics and at the same time the singer is advised to touch his or her stomach, the gesture supports understanding the meaning of the word and probably its later recall. Additionally, repeating certain lyrics in refrains can potentially further increase the salience and therefore the recollection of these structures, words or morphemes.

Singing is also a way to increase output, which Swain (2000) emphasized as playing an important role in language acquisition. In singing, learners are producing readymade meaningful phrases that should enable them acquire various structures

and vocabulary in a correct form. Practicing these linguistic features enables them to automatize phrases that can be used later in more creative output, for example, in interacting with others. When a singer–learner sings the song in a target language (i.e., produces output), he or she is being active in a learning process. The role of activity in learning is also emphasized by van Lier (1998), Mackey (1999), Swain (2000) and Towell (2012). On the other hand, modified output, defined as simpler vocabulary and linguistic structures, is also beneficial for SLA. Thus, if a learner has an opportunity to listen and at the same time sing lyrics that are premodified (see Mackey, 1999), as often is the case in children's songs and songs that are specifically made for language learning, it can be beneficial for language learning.

Singing could also be beneficial in lowering a language learner's anxiety level for several reasons (see Medina, 2002): First and most important, singing has been shown to actually lower singers' level of anxiety (Grape et al., 2003; Huron, 2006). Second, in singing, the emphasis is often placed on meaning instead of form (VanPatten & Glass, 1998). Third, if L2 learners are interested in the songs they sung, their anxiety level will be even lower (Krashen, 1982/2009). Fourth, when singing together, learners are not asked to produce the language alone (see Phillips, 1992). Instead, they receive support in producing the language from the song lyrics, from a teacher and other learners who sing along and potentially also from a song recording.

Singing could also be seen as a part of an interaction (Frick, 2013). It has been argued that, based on interaction, vocabulary may be easier to learn than some less salient aspects of language, for example grammar or linguistic structures (Mackey, Abbuhl & Gass, 2014). Additionally, as discussed above, the development of vocabulary most likely influences the development of fluency (Ellis, 1996; Chenoweth & Hayes, 2001; Williams, 2012). Therefore, if learners' interaction through songs helps them to enhance their lexis, it should also be possible to see an increase in the number of words in their written output. Further, since memory and automatization of linguistic features are important factors affecting fluency (Chenoweth & Hayes, 2001; Towell, 2012), listening to songs and singing, which have a positive impact on stimulating the recall of the linguistic elements (e.g., Ludke et al., 2014), can be used in developing fluency (Lems, 2005). Williams (2012) has argued that input also plays an essential role in the development of fluency. Thus, it is worth investigating various ways of providing input in relation to the development of fluency. Nonetheless, as Swain (2000) and Towell (2012) have shown, producing a language is also significant for automatizing linguistic patterns in a language user's

memory. Via singing, a language learner receives input at the same time he or she produces language, potentially enhancing the development of fluent language use.

In the first two studies of this thesis, writing fluency, determined by the number of words or the number of words in T-units, correct T-units or clauses, was chosen as the focus of the examination. If learners' interaction through songs helps them to enhance their lexis, an increase of the number of words in written output should also be seen. Further, since listening to songs and singing can have a positive impact on stimulating the recall of linguistic elements (e.g., Ludke et al., 2014), it could be hypothesized that singing and listening to songs might help develop language learners' writing fluency. In addition, the relationship between the rhythmical recitation of poems or song lyrics and the development of writing fluency is also examined. Since language learners are active in producing language when reciting poems or song lyrics (see also Mackey, 1999), it is hypothesized that this method would develop writing fluency more than more passive listening to songs. However, since in singing a learner's activity is combined with the melody's support of language recall, this thesis hypothesizes that singing is a more beneficial method than reciting poems or listening to songs in developing writing fluency.

4.   Language teachers' beliefs and practices

Next, the perspective moves from language learners to language teachers. In the third study of this thesis, Finnish language teachers' beliefs, along their reported classroom practices, are focused on for the following reason: Language teachers' practice in their language classrooms is influenced by the beliefs they hold (e.g., James, 1913). Thus, to examine the use of various teaching methods, it is important to determine what beliefs teachers have related to those methods. This chapter presents theories and research focusing on language teachers' beliefs and the relationship between their beliefs and their classroom practices.

People generally consider that their beliefs represent different aspects of the truth (Dewey, 1910). However, beliefs are both stable and dynamic since they are context-dependent and, thus, they may change based on the influence of other people (Dewey, 1910; James, 1913). People form their beliefs based on what they consider meaningful and relevant for themselves, but the construction of beliefs is also socially influenced (Negueruela-Azarola, 2011; Vygotsky, 1962/1986). For example, language teachers' personal lives and learning and teaching experiences help formulate their beliefs about language learning and teaching (Borg, 2006; Dufva, Aro, Alanen & Kalaja, 2011). Further, teachers' previous schooling and professional studies, their working contexts and their collegial interactions and curriculum affect their beliefs about teaching (Borg, 2006; Richards, Tung & Ng, 1992; Voet & De Wever, 2016). The beliefs that are formed from previous experiences affect language teachers' actions (Barcelos & Kalaja, 2011; Borg, 2011).

Richards, Tung and Ng (1992) studied language teachers' beliefs and actions, and they found them to be related to each other and influenced by teaching experiences and training: The more experienced the teachers were, the more they were aware of the communicative and practical aims of language teaching. However, even though language teachers' beliefs seem to be in line with general, theoretical knowledge about language learning (Mangubhai, Marland, Dashwood & Son, 2004), their actions are not always in line with their beliefs (Negueruela-Azarola, 2011). Language teachers' beliefs about language learning or teaching have often been found to be incongruent with their classroom practice (e.g., Basturkmen, Loewen & Ellis, 2004; Karavas-Doukas, 1996; Ng & Farrell, 2003; Sato & Kleinsasser, 1999). For example, in Karavas-Doukas' (1996) study, as well as in Sato and Kleinsasser's (1999) study, teachers held positive beliefs toward communicative language teaching (CLT), but only limited CLT was evident in their teaching practice. This gap between beliefs and practices might be explained by Borg's (2006) argument that theoretical

and practical knowledge are two different sources of knowledge. Nevertheless, some studies indicate to the contrary that teachers' views are in line with their practices (e.g., Graden, 1996; Johnson, 1992; Mangubhai et al., 2004; Olson & Singer, 1994).

Overall, beliefs influence language teachers' perceptions about language teaching and learning, and therefore affect actual language classroom activities (Barcelos, 2003). Since teachers' beliefs affect their language teaching (Barcelos, 2003), obtaining information about these beliefs is valuable for understanding their teaching practices (Wan, Low & Li, 2011). In this thesis, Finnish language teachers' beliefs about using singing, listening to songs and reciting poems in teaching Finnish language, and the relationship between these beliefs and their reported practices were examined.

5.   The aims and structure of the study

In this thesis, the general aim is to investigate singing, listening to songs and reciting poems as pedagogical methods. Moreover, Finnish language teachers' beliefs and reported practices related to these three methods are examined. This thesis comprises three interrelated studies. The first two studies focus on students' development of writing fluency through singing, listening to songs and reciting poems, and the third study focuses on Finnish language teachers' beliefs about and reported practices using these three methods in language teaching. The specific aims of the sub-studies and the papers in which the studies are published or are under review are presented in Figure 1.

GENERAL AIMS

To investigate singing, listening to songs and reciting poems as pedagogical methods and to examine how teachers consider and use these methods.

AIM 1

To investigate how singing, listening to songs and reciting song lyrics as pedagogical methods affect writing fluency.

AIM 2

To investigate
1) beliefs that Finnish language teachers (working in different educational settings in Finland and abroad) hold about singing, listening to songs and reciting poems as pedagogical methods;
2) whether there is a relationship between teachers' beliefs or practices and their pedagogical qualifications, working experiences or educational settings;
3) whether there is a relationship between teachers' beliefs and their reported classroom practices.

STUDIES 1 & 2

Study 1: Fluency was measured as the number of words used in narratives based on two different series of pictures written in pre- and post-tests.
Study 2: Fluency was measured as the total number of words, as well as the number of words in T-units, correct T-units and clauses (T-unit consists of a main clause and subordinate clauses attached to it). The same narratives were used as in study 1.
The students' opinions about the teaching methods and their reported preferred learning approach were compared with the results on the development of writing fluency.

To investigate
1) how singing, listening to songs and reciting the lyrics of the same songs as pedagogical methods affect writing fluency in stories by 32 learners of Finnish on A2.1 language proficiency level;
2) how the students consider the different teaching methods;
3) how would the reported study approach influence the development of writing fluency.

STUDY 3

- Beliefs and reported practices were investigated through an online survey.
- Likert-scaled responses were analysed statistically and data from open-ended questions were coded and categorized based on the responses.
- Differences between beliefs and practices on the three different pedagogical methods and the relationships between teachers' beliefs and practices were analysed statistically.

PAPER 1

Title: Increasing fluency in L2 writing through singing
Data: Stories written by 51 A2-level Finnish as an additional language students and collected in pre- and post-tests
Journal: *Studies of Second Language Learning and Teaching, 6(2),* 271–292
Readership: Scholars of second language acquisition and second language teachers

PAPER 2

Title: Laulamalla sujuvuutta suomen oppijoiden kirjoittamiseen [Increasing fluency in Finnish learners' writing with singing]
Data: Stories written by 32 A2.1 level Finnish as an additional language students and collected in pre- and post-tests and a survey concerning students' opinions about the teaching methods and their preferred learning approach
Journal: *Kasvatus, 47(4),* 313–326
Readership: Teacher educators and scholars of educational sciences in Finland

PAPER 3

Title: Songs and poems in the language classroom (under review)
Data: Survey data of 94 Finnish language teachers working in different educational settings in Finland and abroad
Journal: *Teaching and Teacher Education*
Readership: Teacher educators and scholars of educational sciences
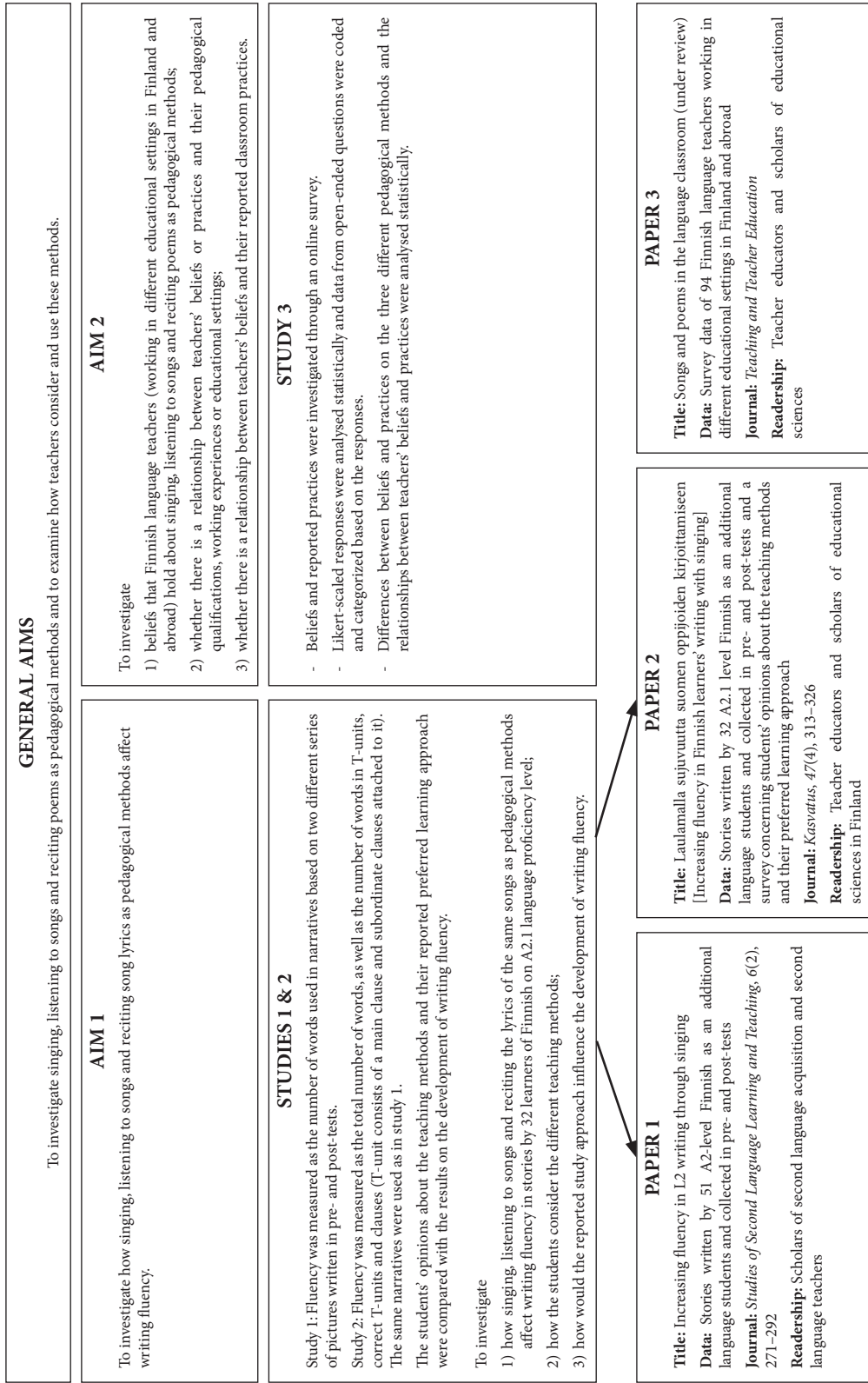
Figure 1. A flow diagram representing an overview of this research

6. Methods

6.1 Participants

In the first and the second study, the participants were university students aged 18–33 years from different universities, mainly in Europe and North America, who attended two intensive courses on Finnish Language and Culture in Finland. The courses were organized by a Finnish university in cooperation with the Center for International Mobility (CIMO), and they were targeted for beginners. The courses were organized simultaneously over approximately four weeks. The participants (*n*=67) were preselected for the course Finnish Language and Culture I or Finnish Language and Culture IIA by CIMO and the local course organizers according to their level of Finnish language proficiency. All participants provided their written consent to participate in the study. The time the students had studied the Finnish language varied: The participants in course I had been studying Finnish for one-half to one year, and their language proficiency levels were mainly A1–A2[2] (CEFR, 2011). Course IIA participants had been studying Finnish for one to two years, and their proficiency levels were mainly A2–B1 (CEFR, 2011). The language proficiency levels were originally evaluated by the students' home universities' teachers and re-evaluated by the author of this thesis together with her colleague who was a co-researcher in these studies. In Study 1, students with a language proficiency level of A2 were under examination. In Study 2, participants mainly had an A2.1 proficiency level.

In Study 3, the participants were 94 Finnish as a second language teachers working in Finland and abroad. The participants represent 21% (*n*=74) of teachers working as Finnish as L2 teachers in Finland (Kumpulainen, 2014). The rest of the participants were Finnish teachers working in foreign universities or Finland-Schools[3] abroad. The sample represents 2% of the teachers working in Finland-Schools (*n*=10) (M. Hyvärinen, personal communication, February 16, 2016) and 4% of the teachers working in universities abroad (*n*=10) (K. Heikkilä, personal

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[2] Language proficiency levels are determined by CEFR (2011):
 A1 Beginner
 A2 Elementary
 B1 Intermediate
 B2 Upper Intermediate
 C1 Advanced
 C2 Mastery
 They can be further divided to subcategories. For example, in the Finnish version of CEFR (Finnish National Board of Education, 2009), level A2 can be divided to A2.1 (early phase of basic language skills) and A2.2 (developing basic language skills).
[3] Finland-Schools are voluntary schools that teach Finnish to children who have a Finnish background.

communication, February 16, 2016). The educational working settings varied from kindergarten to universities, and many participants were working in multiple settings simultaneously.

The working experience of the participants in Study 3 varied from less than two to more than 15 years. Approximately one-fifth had been working 5–10 years, one-fifth 10–15 years and one-fifth more than 15 years. Approximately one-third of the teachers had been working 3–5 years, and only one-tenth of the teachers had been working for two years or less. The teachers with more than five years of teaching experience were classified as *experienced teachers*, and they represent 62% of the sample. The teachers who had less than five years of working experience were classified as *inexperienced teachers* and they represent the remaining 38% of the sample.

The teachers' professional training also varied from bachelor's to doctoral studies. Of the teachers, 72% (*n*=68) had formal teaching credentials, while 27% (*n*=25) did not (one respondent did not answer this question). The relatively high number of teachers without pedagogical qualification is explained by two reasons: In Finland, teachers who work in adult education are not required to have completed pedagogical studies. Further, in Finland-Schools, the teachers are mainly the mothers of students, and they do not necessarily have educational training. Among the pedagogically unqualified teachers, four were working at the K–12 level, 10 in adult education, five in Finland-Schools and six in other settings. Furthermore, 64% (*n*=16) of the pedagogically unqualified teachers had been working more than five years. The teachers with formal teaching credentials were classified as *pedagogically qualified* and those without these credentials were classified as *pedagogically unqualified*.

6.2   Singing, listening to songs and reciting song lyrics as teaching methods[4]

In Studies 1 and 2, the teaching methods used during the research-related sessions of the intensive courses were singing, listening to songs and reciting song lyrics

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[4]   In this thesis, the term *method* is used to refer to the use of singing, listening to songs and reciting poems in language teaching. The term *technique* is considered to refer to single activities teachers use to reach an immediate objective, while *method* is considered to be a more theory-based, holistic view of teaching aiming at more long-term objectives than techniques. According to Richards and Rodgers (2001, p. 15), a method is based on a theory or theories of language or language learning, and it aims to develop language in the most optimal and efficient manner. Moreover, a method includes 'a systematic set of teaching practices' (Richards & Rodgers, 2001, p. 1). This thesis argues that the use of songs and poems in language teaching is justified both by theoretical knowledge concerning language learning and by systematic practices related to each particular method. However, in the third study of this thesis, the term technique is used instead of method due to the requirements of the journal to which the paper was submitted.

rhythmically. All the students participated in seven teaching sessions where songs or poems where used as teaching methods. These sessions were spaced evenly throughout the courses. The sessions were 15 minutes each, 105 minutes of the total 80 hours of instruction. For the singing method, different types of songs were intended to be actively sung by the teacher and students, while for the listening-to-songs method, the main purpose was only to listen to songs, and students were not encouraged to sing, even though some students may sometimes have wanted to sing along simultaneously. For singing, the songs could first be listened to for the purpose of becoming familiar with the song's melody before singing, but listening was not the main purpose. For the method involving reciting song lyrics, the song lyrics were recited rhythmically but without a melody. Study 3 investigated Finnish language teachers' views and reported practices concerning these three teaching methods.

6.3   Data

In Figure 1, the data from the three studies of this thesis are presented. For Studies 1 and 2, participants wrote two narratives based on a picture series in a pre-test and a post-test. Their development of writing fluency was analysed based on these narratives. In Study 1, writing fluency was determined by the number of words used in the written text. In Study 2, along with the total number of the words, writing fluency was determined by the number of words in T-units, correct T-units and clauses in written texts (Wolfe-Quintero et al., 1998). Both of the studies investigated whether there were differences in the development of writing fluency between the groups that had been taught by different teaching methods. Further, in Study 2, students' opinions about the teaching methods used and their preferred language learning approaches were gathered by means of a survey. The results were qualitatively compared with the results on the development of writing fluency.

In Study 3, an on-line survey was used to gather Finnish language teachers' beliefs and reported practices related to the use of songs and poems in language teaching. Likert-scaled responses were analysed statistically, and open-ended questions were coded and categorized based on the responses.

6.3.1 Students' opinions concerning the teaching methods and learning approaches

In Study 2, participants' opinions concerning singing, listening to a song or reciting poems as language teaching methods were investigated. The students' opinions were

considered relevant since motivation is an important aspect of language learning (Dörnyei, 2005; Ellis, 2008; Gardner, 2001), and opinions of the teaching method used could be related to the learners' motivation.

The students' opinions were gathered using a questionnaire that included a question about the relevance of the teaching method (singing, listening to songs or reciting poems) used in their study group. This Likert-scaled (1–5) statement was used: 'The teaching sessions where singing / listening to songs / reciting song lyrics was used were really nice / nice / OK / boring / very boring.' Informal language was used in these options to ensure students' understanding of the meaning of the statement since it was considered easier to comprehend. Additionally, the students were asked what kind of approach they typically preferred to use when they were learning Finnish language. The options were either form focused ('I study the grammar') or meaning focused ('I study by reading / writing / speaking / listening') (see Järvinen, 2014). The students' opinions of the teaching methods and their reported learning approaches were compared with their results in writing fluency development.

6.3.2   Language teachers' beliefs and reported practices

In study 3, Finnish language teachers' beliefs and reported practices concerning singing, listening to songs and reciting poems as language teaching methods were investigated by the means of an online survey. The survey questionnaire included three areas: 1) teachers' beliefs about singing, listening to songs and reciting poems as language-teaching methods, 2) teachers' reported practices in language classrooms concerning the three teaching methods and 3) background information including teachers' formal training and experience. The questionnaire included both Likert-scaled (1–4) statements ($n=153$) and open-ended questions ($n=18$). Respondents could also use 'zero' to indicate that a particular question did not apply to their context (e.g., 'I use songs with children') or that they did not know how to answer the specific question. These responses were eliminated from the analysis.

To determine their beliefs, teachers were asked their opinions on the psychological and pedagogical benefits of the three methods and their appropriateness for educational use. To determine teachers' practices, the same statements and questions were used for the three separate methods: singing, listening to songs and the use of poems in language teaching. Table 1 shows the number and type of items in the survey regarding beliefs and practices.

Table 1. Number and types of survey items regarding beliefs and practices

		Singing	Listening to songs	Reciting poems	General
A. Beliefs	Psychological benefits	10	10	10	-
	Pedagogical benefits	15	15	15	-
	Appropriateness for use with language learners	3	3	3	-
B. Practice		20	20	21	7

6.4   Analyses

Study I

In the first study, the author of this thesis, together with her co-researcher Leena Maria Heikkola, analysed the number of words written in the pre-tests and the post-tests. Next, quantitative analysis was used to examine the number of words and the changes in them from pre-test to post-test. Then, the IBM SPSS Statistics 22.0 program (IBM; Armonk, New York, USA) was used for analysis. Repeated-measures analysis of variance (ANOVA), as well as the calculation of effect sizes for the different groups were carried out investigate whether there was an interaction between writing fluency, measured by the number of the words produced in a limited time, and the different teaching methods (i.e., singing, listening to songs or reciting song lyrics).

Study II

In the second study, the author of this thesis, together with her co-researcher Heikkola, analysed the number of the words, T-units, correct T-units and clauses written in the pre-tests and the post-tests. The two researchers analysed the data separately, and the results were compared. The researchers had analysed all but five cases similarly, and those five cases were solved by negotiation. Then, the IBM SPSS Statistics 22.0 program (IBM; Armonk, New York, USA) was used for repeated-measures ANOVA analysis to analyse the differences between the groups that were taught using different teaching methods (singing, listening to songs or reciting song lyrics) in the development of writing fluency, measured as the number of the words, T-units, correct T-units or clauses in the written pre-test and the post-test.

Second, the students' opinions about the teaching methods and their reported language-learning approach (form-focused or meaning-focused) was compared

with the results of the writing fluency results measured by the number of the words. The opinions and the learning approaches could only be compared qualitatively with the writing fluency results since almost all participants considered the teaching methods used to be positive. Also the distribution of the reported approaches was uneven, and thus, relatively small groups were formed according to these categories.

Study III

In Study 3, data from the Likert-scaled questions from the teacher survey were analysed using the IBM SPSS Statistics 22.0 program (IBM; Armonk, New York, USA). First, descriptive statistics were used to describe beliefs and practices related to the three different teaching methods. The results of the three different teaching methods were first analysed separately to reveal any similarities or differences among them. Subsequently, sum variables were created to examine the overall effects of the three teaching methods. To investigate the reliability of the survey, the frequency distributions of individual statements, their correlations and Cronbach's alpha were calculated. Principal component analysis was used to investigate the validity of the survey's structure based on different statements to determine whether the sum variables based on statements comprised the same principal components. The results from the distribution of the principal components showed that the categorization of individual statements was justified. The reliability of the questionnaire was investigated by calculating Cronbach's alpha scores between the individual statements within one sum variable. The scores were high, from 0.86 to 0.95. In addition, the frequency distribution of the answers supported the reliability of the questionnaire.

Second, dependent-sample t-tests were run to determine whether there were statistical differences between beliefs and practices concerning the three different teaching methods. Third, cross tables were used to analyse the relationships among teachers' beliefs and practices. Fourth, differences among 1) the teachers with and without pedagogical qualification, 2) the teachers working at the K–12 level, in adult education or in Finland-Schools, and 3) the experienced and less-experienced teachers were analysed using ANOVA and cross tables.

Open-ended responses were analysed by content analysis (Corbin & Strauss, 2008), with data coded and categories created based on the responses. First, the author of this thesis reviewed with her co-researcher all items to create the coding categories. Statements with similar meanings were pooled to help define the categories. Initial categories formulated were *positive feelings*, *negative feelings*, *active involvement*, *relaxation*, *sentimental reactions*, *empowerment* and *group dynamics*. These categories were then verified in discussions among seven doctoral students

and two professors who jointly concluded that the categories were accurate and comprehensive.

The data from the open-ended questions were then reanalysed independently by the two researchers to code the responses to the established categories. The inter-rater reliability was 97.97% and the remaining cases (six cases out of 247) were assigned to categories through discussion between the researchers until the appropriate labelling was agreed on. Finally, the responses were reviewed a third time to ensure accurate coding.

7.   Overview of the empirical studies

This thesis includes three studies that examined singing, listening to songs and reciting song lyrics or poems as teaching methods. The first two studies examine these three methods' relationship with the development of writing fluency, but the second one extends the examination of fluency a bit further by using more fluency measures. Additionally, the second study describes the students' opinions on the teaching methods used and their preferred learning approaches. The third study explores Finnish language teachers' beliefs and reported practices concerning singing, listening to songs and reciting song lyrics or poems as teaching methods.

7.1   Study I

Alisaari, J., & Heikkola, L. M. (2016). Increasing fluency in L2 writing with singing. *Studies in Second Language Learning and Teaching*, **6(2), 271–292.**
The aim of the first study was to investigate how singing, listening to songs and reciting song lyrics as pedagogical methods are related to the development of writing fluency. Data for this study were from a larger data set of two Finnish language intensive courses I and IIA organized by a Finnish University with the Center of International Mobility (CIMO). All 67 students participated in the intervention representing language levels that varied from A1 to B1 (see also CEFR, 2011). For the purposes of this study, only the responses from the 51 students at level A2 were examined. They represented 77.6% of all participants. Data were gathered in pre-tests and post-tests, where the participants wrote narratives based on two comic strips focusing on everyday situations. The pre-test and post-test were identical.

During the intensive courses, all 67 students attending were divided into six groups: Singing Group I, Listening Group I, Reciting Group I, Singing Group IIA, Listening Group IIA and Reciting Group IIA. The courses included 80 hours of teaching. During the course, all students participated in teaching sessions related to this study that were organized in the following way: Singing groups learned Finnish by singing, listening groups learned Finnish by listening to songs and reciting groups learned Finnish by reciting song lyrics. The same songs were used in all the groups; the only difference between the groups was the teaching method.

Overall, the results revealed that writing fluency, examined as the number of words, developed most in singing groups and least in the listening groups. There was a statistically significant difference between the singing and reciting group ($p=.014$) and between the listening and reciting groups ($p=.013$). The effect sizes pointed

to a difference especially between the singing and reciting groups. There was no statistically significant difference between the results of the singing and listening groups.

In conclusion, according to the results of this study, singing is a sound method for second language teaching when the aim is to increase writing fluency, at least at language proficiency level A2. However, more research is needed to examine the relationship between singing, listening to songs and reciting song lyrics or poems as language teaching methods and the development of writing fluency.

7.2 Study II

Alisaari, J., & Heikkola, L. M. (2016). Laulamalla sujuvuutta suomenoppijoiden kirjoittamiseen [Increasing fluency in Finnish learners' writing with singing]. *Kasvatus, 47*(4), 313–326.

Study 2 expanded on Study 1 by examining the relationship between singing, listening to songs and reciting song lyrics or poems as language teaching methods and the development of writing fluency. This was done by 1) using more measures to determinate and measure writing fluency and 2) looking at the participants with a slightly different language proficiency level than those in Study 1. A second aim was to explore the students' opinions about the aforementioned teaching methods and their reported preferred learning approach and to compare the opinions and learning approaches to the results on the development of writing fluency.

As in Study 1, the data for this study came from a larger data set gathered in the Finnish language intensive courses. For the purposes of this study, the participants (n=32) from Listening Group I, Reciting Group I and Singing Group IIA were selected for research since in these three groups 72.73% of the students were at language level A2.1 (CEFR, 2011), which was selected to be the focus of this sub-study.

In this study, writing fluency was measured by the total number of words, as well as the number of words in T-units, correct T-units and clauses (T-unit consists of a main clause and subordinate clauses attached to it). The same narratives from Study 1 were used as data in Study 2. The students' opinions about the teaching methods and their preferred learning approach were compared with the results on the development of writing fluency.

The results of this study indicated that writing fluency, measured by the number of words, developed most in the singing group and least in the reciting group. A one-way ANOVA revealed a statistically significant difference between the groups

$F(2,29)$, = 4,355, p=.022. When comparing the groups with pair-wised comparisons, there was a statistically significant difference between the singing and reciting group (p=.029), Cohen's d=0.33 and the listening and reciting group (p=.010), Cohen's d=0.08, with a small effect size. No statistically significant difference was found between the singing and listening groups. When analysing fluency, measured by the number of words in T-units, correct T-units and clauses, there was no notable development in any of these categories in any groups.

The students' opinions of the three teaching methods used were highly positive; however, the students in the singing group had the most positive opinions of their teaching method. There were a few negative opinions about the methods, but the negative opinions did not have a negative effect on the development of writing fluency. Looking at the preferred learning approaches, most students reported preferring meaning-focused approaches: 61% of the students reported using speaking or listening for studying Finnish language and 15% for reading or writing. Only 18% of the students reported preferring studying grammar when learning Finnish. Since the division into preference groups was not equal, no statistical comparisons between preferred learning approach and development of writing fluency could be conducted. However, when looking at the results qualitatively, the students who reported preferring to learn Finnish by listening or speaking had the largest increase in writing fluency.

In sum, the results of this study confirmed the results of the Study 1 that singing increases writing fluency, at least when measured by the number of words in the whole text. Moreover, the results indicate that the students considered singing to be the most positive teaching method. Because the data set was the same as in Study 1, though examined from a different point of view, more research with new data would be needed to study the relationship between singing, listening to songs and reciting song lyrics or poems as language teaching methods and the development of writing fluency. Moreover, the relationships among these aforementioned teaching methods and other dimensions of language development should be further examined.

7.3   Study III

Alisaari, J., & Heikkola, L. M. Songs and poems in the language classroom (under review). Submitted to *Teaching and Teacher Education*.

The main aim of this study was to investigate the Finnish language teachers' beliefs about singing, listening to songs and reciting poems as pedagogical methods. The second aim was to examine whether there would be a relationship between teachers'

beliefs or practices and their pedagogical qualifications, working experiences or educational settings. The third aim was to compare the relationship between teachers' beliefs and their reported classroom practices.

Data for this study were gathered through an on-line survey of 94 Finnish language teachers working in various educational settings in Finland and abroad. The link to the questionnaire was sent to three email lists (Finnish L2 teachers in Finland, Finnish teachers at universities abroad, and Finnish teachers at Finland-Schools all over the world) and shared on social media (various Facebook groups for Finnish L2 teachers in Finland). Receivers could further share the link; thus, the exact response rate is not possible to determine.

The participants' teaching experiences varied from less than two years to more than 15 years. The teachers with more than five years of teaching experience were classified as *experienced teachers*, and the teachers with less than five years of working experience were classified as *inexperienced teachers*. The teachers' professional preparation also varied from bachelor's degrees to doctoral degrees. The teachers with formal teaching credentials were classified as *pedagogically qualified*; those without these credentials were classified as *pedagogically unqualified*.

The results of this study indicated that the teachers had highly positive beliefs about the psychological and pedagogical benefits of singing, listening to songs and reciting poems. Singing was considered psychologically the most effective method, and listening to songs was valued pedagogically as the most appropriate method. In contrast with teachers' positive beliefs, the findings revealed that singing (M=2.09, SD=0.94) and reciting poems (M=1.85, SD=0.84) were seldom or never used, and listening to songs was seldom used or only used occasionally (M=2.61, SD=0.72). Singing was mainly used for teaching or practicing vocabulary and pronunciation or in conjunction with teaching subjects related to Finnish culture. Reciting poems was used mainly for practicing pronunciation. Listening to songs was used somewhat more often and more comprehensively, mainly for teaching or practicing vocabulary, structures and listening comprehension, as well as for teaching subjects related to Finnish culture. There were no remarkable differences between teachers working in different educational settings or between pedagogically qualified and unqualified, or experienced and inexperienced teachers. For teachers who reported using particular techniques, their practice was mainly supported by their beliefs. There were also anomalies that were not expected. Some teachers who reported using the methods in their language classrooms for a particular purpose did not consider the methods appropriate for that purpose. Further, overall, reported teaching practices did not completely align with teachers' stated beliefs.

In sum, teachers had positive beliefs concerning the appropriateness and benefits of all the examined teaching methods, and their beliefs were in line with the findings of the studies concerning the benefits of music and singing in language learning. However, the teachers reported using these same methods only occasionally. This reflects a discrepancy between teachers' beliefs and practices. Earlier studies have also shown that, even though teachers consider some language teaching methods to be beneficial, they do not necessarily use them in their language classrooms (e.g., Karavas-Doukas, 1996; Sato & Kleinsasser, 1999). Even though singing was considered the most beneficial method from a psychological perspective, teachers believed that listening to songs was pedagogically the most appropriate, and it was also the most used method. This might indicate that it is a more comfortable method for a teacher to use, as it does not require teachers to put themselves in the spotlight. However, it does not require the active production of language by learners, and thus, it is not the most efficient method, as has been shown in previous research. In conclusion, it might be worth encouraging teachers to use singing as a language teaching method more comprehensively and more often.

8.   Main findings and discussion

The main aim of this thesis was to investigate singing, listening to songs and reciting poems as pedagogical methods. First, the relationship between these methods and the development of writing fluency and students views on these teaching methods was examined. It was hypothesized that singing would be a more beneficial method than reciting poems or listening to songs for developing writing fluency since during singing learners are actively producing the language and, additionally, singing has been proven to enhance the learning of linguistic features (e.g., Ludke et al., 2014), which is a prerequisite for the development of fluency (e.g., Chenoweth & Hayes, 2001). Earlier research has shown that music motivates students (e.g., Grape et al. 2003), and thus, it was expected that also in this study participants would view singing and listening to songs more positively than reciting poems. Second, Finnish language teachers' beliefs and reported practices related to these three methods were investigated. Previous research has shown that teachers' beliefs are in line with the knowledge gained from previous studies (Mangubhai et al., 2004); however, their beliefs and practice are not always congruent (e.g., Basturkmen et al., 2004). Thus, there was a possibility that, also in this study, teachers could be aware of the positive influence of music on learning but an incongruity between teachers' beliefs and practices could exist.

The main result of this thesis is that singing is a beneficial and positively viewed pedagogical method for language learning and teaching. Singing was more beneficial for developing writing fluency, measured by number of the words used, than listening to songs or reciting poems, and students considered singing to be the most positive method among the three studied teaching methods. Teachers also had highly positive beliefs about all the three methods. However, they reported using them only seldom or never, listening to songs being an exception even though this method was also reportedly used seldom or occasionally.

The result indicating that singing is the most beneficial method of the three studied is in line with the previous research of Ludke et al. (2014) where they found that singing, as a way of presentation, was more beneficial for recalling a Hungarian text than either rhythmic reciting or a traditionally spoken presentation of the same text. Some studies have shown that melody is more beneficial for recall than mere linguistic input (Sammler et al., 2010; Thaut et al., 2005; Yalch, 1991). However, others have indicated that rhythm is more beneficial than melody (Purnell-Webb & Speelman, 2008; Stahl et al., 2011). According to the findings of present study, when production of output is combined with a melody (i.e., when singing) the result is

the most beneficial. When there is melody but no output (i.e., listening to songs) or only output but no melody (i.e., reciting), the gains are not as pronounced, and no conclusions can be reached on the second best method based on the findings of this thesis. However, the result that singing is more beneficial than listening to songs or recitation is only partly in line with previous research.

The result indicating that students considered singing to be the most positive method is to some degree in line with previous research. In earlier studies, no comparisons were made among singing, listening to songs or reciting poems or song lyrics as language teaching methods, and thus, students' opinions of these methods have also not been previously compared. However, there are studies indicating that music creates a positive atmosphere (Grape, 2003; Huron, 2006), and the present result could be seen as supporting those findings.

Teachers' beliefs were in line with the knowledge gained from earlier studies which is in line with the findings of Mangubhai et al. (2004). The teachers in the present study were aware of the benefits of using songs in language teaching. Overall, the teachers held highly positive beliefs regarding the appropriateness and benefits of all three studied teaching methods, but the only method they used occasionally was listening to songs; they used singing and reciting poems seldom if ever. The finding that teachers' beliefs and reported practice were not in line with each other also supports previous findings: In the studies of Negueruela-Azarola (2011), Basturkmen, et al. (2004), Karavas-Doukas (1996), Ng and Farrell (2003) and Sato and Kleinsasser (1999), similar results were found. However, contrary findings indicating that teachers' beliefs are in line with their practices have been demonstrated by Graden (1996), Johnson (1992), Mangubhai et al. (2004) and Olson and Singer (1994). However, this research was the first to investigate language teachers' beliefs and practices related to the use of songs and poems; thus, the results cannot be fully compared with the results of the earlier studies.

This thesis was the first study to compare singing, listening to songs and reciting poems or song lyrics with each other, and it therefore provides important insights on the field of SLA research related to the use of songs or poems in language learning. Moreover, this research was the first to study the relationship between using songs or poems as language teaching methods and the development of writing fluency. The relationship between using songs or poems in language teaching and writing skills in general has not been studied before, so this research brings considerable new knowledge to L2 teaching about the appropriateness of using singing in language classrooms.

The findings that students and teachers considered singing to be a highly positive method, but teachers used it only occasionally, also bring new knowledge to the field of SLA research and language teaching. This thesis argues that teachers should be encouraged to use singing more comprehensively in their language classrooms: Singing has been shown to have a positive impact on language learning both in this and earlier studies.

8.1   Theoretical, methodological and empirical considerations

The results of this thesis contribute to the theoretical knowledge in the field of second language acquisition regarding the use of songs, especially singing, in language classrooms. First, research suggests that language learning is most effective when learners are not anxious (see MacIntyre & Gardner, 1991 for a review of various studies). Study 2 of this thesis lends support to the findings of previous studies concerning singing in classrooms, where it has been shown that singing lowers the level of anxiety (Grape et al., 2003; Huron, 2006). Conditions in this study included aspects that are likely to lower the level of anxiety while singing: 1) language learners were not producing the language alone without any help (see Horwitz et al., 1986; Philips, 1992; Woodrow, 2006) because they received help from the other singers, as well as from the song lyrics; 2) during singing the emphasis was on meaning instead of form (e.g., Stevick, 1999); and 3) learners seemed to be motivated by and showed interest in the learning situation (see, e.g., Stevick, 1999).

Second, according to an ecological approach to language learning, to reach the best possible outcomes, learners have to 1) be able to get affordances in a comprehensible way, 2) pay attention to a language and 3) produce the language by themselves (van Lier, 1998). In this research, children's songs that were easy to learn due to their simple lyrics and structures were used, and illustrated handouts and gestures supported the understanding of the lyrics' meaning, and thus the affordances were easily comprehensible. When the learners sang the songs, they were able to pay attention to the lyrics' words, phrases and structures. Moreover, when learners sang, they produced the language by themselves. The results of this study corroborate the theoretical considerations that underpin the ecological approach.

Third, Mackey (1999), Swain (2000) and Towel (2012) argue that learners' activity is crucial for language acquisition. In this study, participants were singing songs in combination with gestures and movements, and thus learners were active. Fourth, memory and automatization of linguistic features are prerequisites for the development of fluency (Chenoweth & Hayes, 2001; Towell, 2012). Singing has been shown to have a positive effect on memory (e.g., Ludke et al., 2014) which

might also been the case in this research as demonstrated by the development of the participants' writing fluency. Namely, it could be argued that repeated lyrics, for example refrains, increased the automatization of linguistic patterns in the language learners' memory.

SLA research is multidisciplinary, combining knowledge from various fields (Gass & Mackey, 2014), including the fields of language, psychology and educational sciences. The results of the first two studies of this thesis indicating that singing is a beneficial method of language learning could be explained by the aforementioned theoretical perspectives combined with the knowledge received from previous studies on singing and music. In sum, it could be argued that singing as a language teaching method takes into account not just the technical aspects of a language, but also the dispositions of the learners and how they respond to different types of input. This could be considered a benefit of the research, and it could be argued that implications of the knowledge gained from fields other than SLA theory alone should also be applied in language classrooms.

In this thesis, it was hypothesized that singing would develop writing fluency for the following reasons: When using singing as a language teaching method, the number of the words used by a student in writing a text may be an indication of the development of their writing fluency for the following reasons. The length of a written text reflects a writer's vocabulary skills (Honko, 2013), and singing is an effective method for remembering words and phrases (Legg, 2009; Ludke et al., 2014; Medina, 1990). Since memory and automatized use of words and phrases are essential for fluent production (Chenoweth & Hayes, 2001, 84; Housen et al., 2012; Segalowitz, 2000; Towell, 2012), it could be argued that singing efficiently increases the recall of language in a way that also increases fluency.

This hypothesis was confirmed by the results of the first two studies. Singing is more effective than listening to songs, which might be due to the fact while both singers and listeners receive an input, only singers produce an output at the same time. As Swain (2000) and Towell (2012) have argued, not only receiving input, but also producing output is essential for language acquisition. Towell (2012) argues that, via production, linguistic patterns are automatized in a language learner's memory. The outcomes of this thesis concur with these earlier suggestions.

For methodological considerations, the results of this thesis may indicate that a fluency measure applicable to the Finnish language is the number of the words in the written text, but not necessarily the number of the words in T-units, correct T-units or clauses. In this study, there was no development in writing fluency measured by methods other than the total number of the words. This may be due to several

reasons. First, the number of words in T-units, correct T-units or clauses may not be an appropriate method to measure writing fluency in Finnish because of differences in the Finnish language compared with, for example, English. In Finnish, a text with long clauses or T-units is not always considered fluent (Martin, 2013). Second, it has to be taken into consideration whether the number of words in T-units or clauses can increase in a four-week period, the distance in time between the pre-test and the post-test in the studies for this thesis. These linguistic features might take a longer time to develop in writing. Third, the use of the number of words in T-units, correct T-units or clauses as a fluency measurement has been criticized by Bulté and Housen (2012) and Martin (2013), as was presented in the theoretical part of this thesis. Thus, the finding of this thesis supports this critique. In future research, reliable measures for studying writing fluency in Finnish language should be further studied: It should be considered, for example, whether the Finnish language's many affixes affect fluency measures.

For empirical considerations, the results of this thesis suggest that it would be beneficial to use singing as a language teaching method more comprehensively in language classrooms. The studies in this thesis, as well as earlier studies, argue that singing is an effective language teaching method in various ways: increasing writing fluency, enabling receptive learning of grammar (Alisaari, 2015), helping to recall words and phrases (Legg, 2009; Ludke et al., 2014; Medina, 1990), and creating a positive and relaxed atmosphere (Garpe et al., 2003; Huron, 2006). The fact that the students identified the method as positive would also argue for the use of singing in language classrooms. Moreover, teachers considered the method highly positive and effective, as well. Because this method is currently seldom used in Finnish language teaching, it seems reasonable to encourage language teachers toward more extensive utilization of singing as part of their instructional repertoire. This has implications for the preparation of language teachers and the content of teacher education programs. These are discussed in the following chapter.

8.2 Educational implications and suggestions for teacher preparation

This work has several educational implications. As earlier research has shown, singing is a beneficial method for language learning, for example, for learning vocabulary, phrases and structures (e.g., Alisaari, 2015; Legg, 2009; Ludke et al., 2014). The results of the first two studies of this thesis indicate that singing is an efficient method for developing writing fluency, as well, at least measured by the number of words used. Fluent writing skills are needed for academic language proficiency: Studying the content of school courses, carrying out professional

studies, and working in many professions require writing fluency. Thus, it could be argued that singing should be more widely applied in language classrooms to increase language learners' development of writing fluency.

It is important to consider how to motivate language learners to engage in language learning, since motivation is an essential factor in learning (Dörnyei, 2005; Ellis, 2008; Gardner, 2001). If singing is a motivating method, it could be argued that it should be used more comprehensively and more often than it is according to the results of Study 3. In the Study 2, the student participants considered singing to be a positive learning method. It should be noted that these participants were adults. Thus, this thesis argues that singing is a beneficial and motivating method for adult education, not only for teaching children as has often been thought. However, it should also be noted that the student participants were not asked to compare singing, listening to songs and reciting poems with other language teaching methods; thus, the results do not provide information about students' opinions on singing compared with, for example, communicative language teaching methods or other more traditional teaching methods.

The teacher–participants in Study 3 reported having positive beliefs about singing, listening to songs and reciting poems in language education. However, even though self-reported language teaching practices should be considered somewhat cautiously, only scarce use of these methods was reported. Listening to songs was the most commonly used method among the three studied methods. Nonetheless, the results of this thesis indicate that it is not the most efficient one: It does not require the learners to be active in producing language. In language education, the use of singing should applied more. Teachers already have positive beliefs about singing. Thus, it should be possible to promote this method for language teachers' actual practice, for example, by providing in-service and pre-service teacher education in which the use of singing as a language teaching method is more precisely presented. On the other hand, this suggests another question for consideration: Is singing as a language teaching method even present in teacher training? In the Finnish context, it is not. Therefore, it is recommended, based on the results of these studies, that in the future teacher educators implement singing as a part of teacher studies along with other language teaching methods.

The teacher–participants in this study reported using singing, listening to songs or reciting poems only minimally, mainly for teaching pronunciation and vocabulary or introducing aspects of Finnish culture. Songs and poems could be used more comprehensively. Using songs in the classroom, however, means not merely playing a song or singing it. The use of songs must be connected with a

teaching goal. When the goal is to teach, for example, vocabulary, the song should be chosen to reach this aim. For English language teaching, there are various databases and teaching materials available to promote the use of songs in language teaching. These materials present various goals and exercises related to songs for teachers to use in their language classrooms. In the Finnish language teaching context, however, there is only one Facebook site providing ideas for using songs in Finnish language teaching. Language teachers themselves provide these ideas. Additionally, Finnish language teachers have recently added a few Finnish songs that can be used with gap-filling exercises on an international website, www.lyricstraining.com. For use by Finland-Schools, Ylänkö (1994) collected a considerable amount of children's songs categorized according to the linguistic aspects present in each song. However, this material is, unfortunately, only randomly available. Further, as of yet there are no Finnish language textbooks that include songs or poems in their teaching materials. Since in the first two studies of this thesis writing fluency increased in all the studied groups that incorporated singing, listening to songs or reciting poems or song lyrics for language teaching, using these methods would, at minimum, not be disadvantageous. To promote the use of singing in language classrooms, sufficient teaching materials would be needed.

The findings of this study have implications for second and other additional language teaching. In this global world, learning a second or other additional language is remarkably common. According to the European Commission (EC), communicating in foreign languages is one of the key competences that every European citizen should acquire (EUR-Lex, 2006). Further, one aim of the EC is that all the Europeans would be plurilingual (i.e., know more than one or two languages). This aim calls for effective language teaching methods that can be applied all over the world. At the same time, growing migration creates challenges for states in organizing efficient language teaching for new inhabitants. It is commonly known that language learning takes time: It takes many years of learning and practicing before language skills are sufficient, for example, for studying without any additional support (e.g., Cummins, 2009). However, there is a need to have new language users able study or work as soon as possible after they have arrived in their new home country. Additionally, recent PISA results demonstrate that even second-generation migrants do not have the level of achievement of native speakers in school subjects (OECD 2015). Thus, more sufficient target language skills are needed, and it is crucial to develop efficient language teaching methods to respond this challenge. This thesis argues that using singing more comprehensively and in a more goal driven fashion for language teaching could be one solution to this challenge. However, there

is a need for more information about the possibilities for using songs in language teaching. Directions for future research are discussed in the following chapter.

8.3   Future directions

As far as it could be established based on a thorough review of the literature, this thesis consists of the first studies investigating the relationship between singing, listening to songs or reciting poems and the development of writing fluency, as well as teachers' beliefs and reported practices related to these three teaching methods. This research contributes to existing knowledge of the benefits of using songs in language teaching by providing support for previous findings. It also confirms findings on the discrepancy between language teachers' beliefs and practices. However, it has raised many questions that need further investigation.

At minimum, it should be further studied how these three teaching methods – singing, listening to songs and reciting poems – are related to the development of other language dimensions, for example, complexity and accuracy in writing, or complexity, accuracy and fluency in speaking. Moreover, it would be beneficial to examine the relationship between these methods and the development of grammar or vocabulary skills. Also the relevant methods for measuring the development of writing fluency in the Finnish language should be further investigated.

Additional questions should be considered. What is the appropriate frequency for using songs or poems in language teaching? Is the frequency used in Studies 1 and 2 optimal, or should there be more or less singing, listening to songs or reciting poems to achieve the optimal outcomes? The frequency with which singing, listening to songs or reciting song lyrics or poems was used in this thesis led to the finding that singing significantly increased the development of fluency. Further research is required to determine whether there would be a similar finding with more or less frequent use of singing. Moreover, further research should be undertaken to explore the benefits of singing in a long-term study.

An additional question to consider is whether the use of gestures and movements influenced the development of the singing sample's writing fluency. Namely, in Studies 1 and 2, for the groups that used singing or recitation as teaching methods, in some children's songs (8 out of 11), some gestures and movements related to the lyrics were also used. This was thought to enhance learning, as well as understanding and recall of vocabulary and language structures (e.g., Lake, 2002; Coyle & Gómez Gracia, 2014). In the listening groups, gestures were not considered to be a natural component of listening to songs in an adult education context; thus, they were not used. This uncontrolled factor created a discrepancy between teaching

methods and was therefore a weakness of this study. In future studies, it should be examined whether the findings would be similar if gestures and movements had been left out of teaching through singing and poem recitation.

Another limitation of this study was the self-reported practices the teachers described in the survey. In future studies, teachers' actual classroom practices should be examined by observing their classrooms. Self-reported practices have limitations, especially when the frequency of the use of the studied methods is in question. It should be more clearly determined what the differences are, for example, between 'occasional' and 'rare' use of methods. An observational study could more reliably report the ways in which songs and poems are used, not only their frequency.

A question also arises about the reasons behind the teachers' beliefs or reported practices in using songs and poems in their language teaching. Is there a relationship, for example, between teachers' hobbies and their beliefs and practices? Is it possible that teachers who report using songs and poems more often have music-related hobbies or other music-related backgrounds affecting their behaviour? This would be an interesting aspect to examine in future work, as well.

The last and potentially most important future direction concerns the need to further examine the topic of the first two studies of this thesis. In these two studies, sub-sets of the same data were used. Further, the sample sizes were relatively small, which must be taken into account when drawing conclusions from the results. However, since the effect sizes between the singing and reciting groups were medium, the results seem to indicate that singing had a more beneficial relationship with writing fluency than did recitation. Overall, this thesis is an initial exploration of the possibilities of using singing as a method to develop writing skills. Studies on a larger scale would be needed to replicate or test the generalizability of the results of this thesis. It would be recommended that data be gathered from other identical interventions. Thus, there is need for more classroom-based SLA research concerning the use of songs and poems in language teaching (Sposet, 2008). Nevertheless, the findings of this thesis suggest that singing is a beneficial method for language teaching, and, importantly, both students and teachers view it positively. Thus, it is recommended that singing be adopted more widely and more comprehensively into language classrooms. Further, it is recommended that, during language teachers' pedagogical studies, teacher educators introduce how to incorporate singing as a language teaching method into language classrooms.

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