

# Swedish Language Studies: Directed Independent Language Studies (DILS) promotes student success

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This portfolio describes how the curriculum in Intermediate Swedish II in the Directed Independent Language Studies (DILS) program at CU provides students with the opportunity to learn Swedish effectively in a student-centered, communicative and proficiency-oriented learning environment, and details a recent change made to reading and listening assignments.

CU students who invest time and resources in learning Swedish, one of the less commonly taught languages, will make significant progress towards proficiency and acquire the communication skills to engage meaningfully and functionally with people in the Scandinavian countries. The portfolio explains how this Swedish course is built on current second language learning principles and has a culture-specific curriculum, communicative language teaching strategies and learning goals based on language proficiency standards. The portfolio details a pre-study on improvements made to vocabulary learning activities in the course.

## Background

Intermediate Swedish II (SWED 2020 DILS) teaches intermediate-level Swedish language skills to students in a small-group format. The course is available through the Nordic Program at the Department of Germanic and Slavic Languages and Literatures (GSSL) and is part of the Directed Independent Language Studies program at Andersen Language Technology Center (ALTEC). Students in this course study a smorgasbord of current and historic topics, ranging from Swedish history and current political events, to contemporary fiction and medieval Viking sagas. Students learn practical communication skills that they use to communicate information and ideas on these subjects and others, participate in spoken and written conversations, and interpret spoken and written language. The course also develops the ability to interpret content and experiences from a cross-cultural perspective.

The portfolio describes a preliminary study in SWED 2020 DILS that looked at the effects of pre-class vocabulary assignments on reading and listening performance in this partially flipped course. The preliminary study investigated whether there was a perceptible difference in learning outcomes between structured and unstructured pre-class vocabulary assignments, compared to when no pre-class vocabulary assignment was administered. The study included data on student perceptions of the vocabulary assignments, which were collected in three anonymous, on-line surveys.

## Implementation

New assignments were implemented in three of six study units in the course. The students were given three different pre-class vocabulary assignments, one for each of the three study units. The first assignment instructed students to learn key vocabulary on a web-based, interactive study application. The second assignment instructed students to learn the vocabulary using an interactive, external learning tool that has voice, text and student comment functions. The third assignment involved a contextualized vocabulary list, which did not provide any interactive features.

Student performance was measured in interpretive reading and listening assessments administered post-assignment, after the vocabulary had been practiced in input- and output-based activities in class.

Readers who are not familiar with modern language instruction will find a description on how SWED 2020 DILS is taught in the Implementation section.

## [Student Work](#)

Student performed at or above expectations on all reading and listening assessments. There was no measurable difference in performance correlated with any of the three assessments.

## [Reflections](#)

The results of the changes made to the curriculum were promising. Students performed well on the assignments, and they were positive to the introduction of these pre-class vocabulary assignments. They liked the structure of the activities and the opportunity for focused vocabulary study. The pre-class assignments successfully freed up time in classroom meetings for more exciting and valuable tasks.

The examination of student work provided suggestions for how study units in future courses can be designed to maximize time for classroom interaction. The opportunity to participate in the MTLV program gave the instructor insights into other teaching disciplines and created a rich learning experience that will be useful in future renditions of SWED 2020 DILS.

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- [Germanic and Slavic Languages and Literatures](#)

Tags:

- [Portfolio Keywords](#)
- [assessment](#)
- [curriculum development](#)
- [flipped classroom](#)

- [foreign language studies](#)
- [learning outcomes](#)
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- [student centered learning](#)
- [student engagement](#)

# Leonhardt-Lupa Portfolio - Background

## Course Description

Intermediate Swedish II (SWED 2020 DILS) is a foreign language course in the Nordic Program at the University of Colorado-Boulder Department of Germanic and Slavic Languages and Literatures (GSSL). The course is supported by the CU Directed Independent Language Studies (DILS) program and is administered by Andersen Language Technology Center (ALTEC). The CU DILS program is modeled after the [Less Commonly Taught Language Program at Yale](#). DILS courses provide students the opportunity to study some of the less commonly taught languages of the world in small-group settings and with lower than average enrollment numbers. The intermediate-level Swedish courses in the CU DILS program typically have five to ten students enrolled per semester.

Approximately 9% of foreign language students in the United States in K12 and higher education study a less commonly taught language. GSSL is one of a few universities that offer a Nordic program with Swedish language studies in the United States. *Association of Swedish Teachers and Researchers in America (ASTRA)* lists 33 academic centers across the US, Canada and Mexico, while the Embassy of Sweden in Washington DC lists 20 US locations. The CU Nordic program is one of a handful of these centers that offer three years of Swedish language studies.

SWED 2020 DILS meets less frequently and has an intensified self-study curriculum compared to other second-year language courses at the university. The independent study component is instructor-guided. While students are encouraged to independently pursue any activity they find useful in meeting the learning goals and objectives, supportive assignments are provided and integrated into the curriculum. These assignments consist of activities and tasks focused on building interpretive reading and listening, presentational reading and writing, and interpersonal communication skills. Traditional foreign language courses also use out-of-classroom assignments to enhance the learning experience. The difference between DILS assignments and traditional assignments is the amount of work students are required to complete independently and how this work is structured in the course. Since DILS courses require learner autonomy, designing helpful assignments for independent study is critical to student success.

Intermediate Swedish II builds practical, communicative language skills that can be used in every-day contexts while exploring Swedish society and culture. The linguistic goals concern *the three modes of communication: interpretive, interpersonal and presentational*. Students interpret Swedish as they listen to, read or view Swedish content, interact in real-time conversations, and

present ideas and information as they speak and write in Swedish. The overall goal is to be able to interact easily in Swedish in everyday, professional and educational contexts, using culturally appropriate expressions and behavior. A study of Swedish culture is integrated into the curriculum. Students develop culture-appropriate communication skills, understanding of culture-specific meanings and behavior, and the ability to interpret content from a cultural perspective.

The skills developed in SWED 2020 DILS lay the foundation for the application of these skills to subjects close to students' personal academic interests, in Advanced Swedish I and II (SWED 3010 and 3020 Individualized Instruction, offered through CU School of Continuing Education).

## Student Characteristics

Students in Intermediate Swedish II (SWED 2020 DILS) are highly motivated. Swedish is not a requirement in any undergraduate degree, nor are Swedish courses included in freshman orientation offerings. Students who choose to study Swedish do so because they have a desire and reason to learn the Swedish language and understand Swedish culture. As this is their fourth semester Swedish, students have a clear purpose for continuing their language studies. The students in SWED 2020 DILS can be grouped into three categories based on their motivation. The first category includes *students with family ties to Sweden and other Scandinavian countries* (“heritage learners”). They may already know some Swedish for everyday communicative purposes but are less proficient in the presentational language modes. Others do not have any prior language skills but have family cultural experiences or significant relationships to Swedish speakers in the U.S. or abroad. The second major group is *students in the CU Education Abroad program*, who either are planning to study in Sweden or have just returned from this experience. The third category is *students with interdisciplinary interests and needs*. Some are pursuing a Nordic Studies minor and are enrolled in culture courses in the Nordic Program. Others are students majoring in or pursuing graduate degrees in linguistics. For yet others, learning Swedish is a means to further accomplishments in their field of study. Examples of former students are a PhD candidate in the College of Music researching music in indigenous Sámi Activism, an environmental studies student interested in the ecology of the Arctic Region, an archeology student digging for medieval artefacts on the island of Gotland, and a social anthropologist researching the emergence of the extreme nationalism and national identities in the Nordic countries. Students with interdisciplinary interests receive support for their cultural and linguistic needs beyond the language curriculum of the class. The small class size enables this type of individualization and also is a stepping stone to the independent studies in Advanced Level Swedish, which offer an even greater ability to accommodate personal interests.

## Learning Goals

The [learning goals in Intermediate Swedish II](#) are communicative, proficiency-oriented and aligned with established proficiency benchmarks. The American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) publishes proficiency benchmarks and performance indicators that guide course design, learning objectives and proficiency goal setting, as well as performance assessments based on ACTFL proficiency descriptors (NCSSFL-ACTFL, 2017). Proficiency

descriptors from the ACTFL proficiency benchmarks were used in the course learning goals, but modified to fit the characteristics of the course and student population. These language proficiency benchmarks make learning targets explicit to students, and measure the extent to which students have achieved specific learning goals.<sup>[1]</sup>

Course outcomes are described in steps towards the target proficiency level in the three modes of communication (interpretive reading and listening, presentational speaking and writing, interpersonal communication). Course objectives, instruction, assignments and assessments are designed to advance students towards specific the language proficiency goals.

The Intermediate II learning goals correspond to an *Intermediate Mid to High* language proficiency level of the [2017 ACTFL Proficiency Benchmarks and Performance Indicators](#). For a quick overview of ACTFL proficiency levels, please see the [LF Self-Assessment Grid](#).

## Teaching Question

This portfolio documents an assignment change implemented in Intermediate Swedish II DILS. Changes were implemented that restructured how and when new vocabulary was learned. The reason for this change was to a) increase student learning of new vocabulary b) decrease the time the instructor spent introducing new vocabulary in the classroom. A small preliminary study to examine the effects of these new vocabulary assignments was carried out.

Since SWED 2020 DILS students were accustomed to completing language assignments independently from previous semesters, the research question was not whether pre-class vocabulary assignments were feasible, but rather what type of activities would be effective.

The characteristics of effective assignments were identified as:

1. Productive vocabulary memorization
2. Measurable progression towards course goals
3. Ease of use
4. Ability to engage and hold students' interest
5. Reasonable time expenditure for students and instructor

The preliminary study examined these variables in three different assignments.

The low enrollment in Intermediate Swedish II did not permit the completion of a full research study that yields reliable data. However, preliminary results are reported here in order to show that the study protocol did work, results were obtained, and to enable initial conclusions.

## Study Details

The preliminary study in Intermediate Swedish II DILS investigated whether there was a perceptible difference in learning outcomes of unstructured and structured pre-class vocabulary assignments, by measuring students' comprehension of key vocabulary used in cognitive-

informational communication. Secondly, it investigated student perceptions of these vocabulary assignments. Thirdly, it investigated whether there was a difference in performance when no pre-class vocabulary assignment had been administered.

**Objective 1:** To investigate whether structured or unstructured pre-class vocabulary assignments are more effective as measured by performance on comprehension-based formative assessments.

**Hypothesis 1:** There is an increase in student performance on comprehension-based formative assessments with the use of structured pre-class vocabulary assignments, as compared to the use of unstructured pre-class vocabulary assignments.

**Objective 2:** To investigate students' perceptions of unstructured and structured vocabulary assignments in terms of their effectiveness, applicability, ability to hold students' interest, and their investment in time.

**Hypothesis 2:** Students will rate structured pre-class vocabulary assignments more favorably than unstructured pre-class vocabulary assignments.

**Objective 3:** To investigate whether structured or unstructured pre-class vocabulary assignments are more effective than no pre-class vocabulary assignments as measured by performance on comprehension-based formative assessments.

**Hypothesis 3:** There is an increase in student performance on comprehension-based formative assessments with the use of structured pre-class vocabulary assignments, as compared to the use of unstructured pre-class vocabulary assignments or no pre-class vocabulary assignments.

## Definitions

*Key vocabulary* is words and phrases in a language domain that are important to the comprehension of written or spoken language/communication. A *pre-class vocabulary assignment* consists of identified key vocabulary that students are expected to comprehend when they come to class. An *unstructured pre-class vocabulary assignment* is vocabulary that students are expected to learn the meaning of independently, without further instructions. A *structured pre-class vocabulary assignment* is a structured vocabulary activity that students are asked to complete before class, in order to help them learn the meaning of assigned vocabulary. These assignments may involve written and/or spoken language.

*Vocabulary familiarization* is the first step in vocabulary acquisition that takes place when students first encounter and familiarize themselves with new vocabulary in preparation for classroom and independent study activities. Vocabulary familiarization is the process of learning new vocabulary passively, that is to gain the ability to comprehend key words as they occur in a linguistic context. This new vocabulary becomes meaningful first after it has been given a communicative purpose and the learner is able to use it in *communication*, which is “the [purposeful] expression, interpretation and sometimes negotiation of meaning in a given context.” (Van Patten, 2017). The use of new vocabulary in meaningful communication is the

end goal of vocabulary acquisition. This study was limited to the investigation of how useful the vocabulary assignment was in building interpretive reading and writing skills.

### Study Design

In three separate pre-class vocabulary assignments, students were asked to familiarize themselves with key vocabulary before coming to class. This familiarization involved studying key words and phrases so that students could comprehend the assigned vocabulary when they read or heard it in a linguistic context. Students were not expected to have mastered the production of the vocabulary in speech and writing in this study.

### Testing Protocol

*Quantitative data* of student performance was collected in four post-assignment formative vocabulary assessments. The purpose of these assessments was to inform the instructor and students on how the students were progressing towards specific learning objectives. The formative assessments were administered after the due date of each vocabulary assignment. The first assessment measured student performance after working on an *unstructured pre-class vocabulary assignment*. The second and third assessment measured student performance after two separate *structured pre-class vocabulary assignments*. The structured pre-class vocabulary assignments provided students with a method of learning the vocabulary, whereas the unstructured assignment provided a vocabulary list with no further instructions. The fourth assessment measured student performance when no prior *pre-class vocabulary assignment* was provided.

*Qualitative data* of student perceptions of the assignments was collected using anonymous, online questionnaires. The questionnaires measured a) student interest and enjoyment in completing the assignment, b) their perceived effort in completing the assignment, c) the assignment's helpfulness in memorizing new vocabulary d) the assignment's helpfulness in meeting learning goals and objectives e) the assignment's helpfulness in meeting students' overall goals and f) time spent on task. Additionally, in the unstructured assignments, students were asked what strategies they used to familiarize themselves with the new vocabulary.

## Significance of Study on Teaching Practices

The preliminary study described in this portfolio was intended to inform the instructor on the effectiveness of new vocabulary activities in reading and listening comprehension assignments implemented in Intermediate Swedish II and to provide input on how successful these changes were from the students' perspective. By sharing the work of the preliminary study, the author hopes to inspire other foreign language instructors who teach in independent study contexts and provide suggestions on what strategies may facilitate the vocabulary acquisition process.

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NCSSFL-ACTFL Performance Indicators for Language Learners (2017) from <https://www.actfl.org/publications/guidelines-and-manuals/ncssfl-actfl-can-do-statements>

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<sup>[1]</sup> There are two major systems of language proficiency guidelines, ACTFL and CEFR (Common European Framework of Reference). CU's Swedish instructor is a certified proficiency tester in both systems. She uses ACTFL standards in her instruction.

# Leonhardt-Lupa Portfolio - Implementation

## Course Design

Readers who have not taken a foreign language class in many years may wonder how Swedish and other foreign languages are currently taught. People whose experiences date ten or twenty years back may recall spending a lot of time in class on pronunciation exercises, detailed grammar book studies and long fill-in-the blank exercises. These activities were designed to make sure that when the learners eventually started using the language outside of class, they would know how to do so correctly. This moment may never have come. Many former U.S. language students will say that they were taught to comprehend written language and also learned *about* the language in detailed, metacognitive grammar lessons, but they didn't learn to comfortably communicate in the language. Their communicative competence was slow to develop (Lightbown & Spada, 2006). To remedy this situation, modern language classes tend to emphasize the development of students' functional language abilities rather than focusing on linguistic competence. Languages are taught with the ultimate goal that students should be able to use what they learn in class in real-world communication, whether they are taking a beginning, intermediate or advanced language course (ACTFL, 2012). To this end, students start to build communicative competence from day one in the classroom.



Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) is instruction that makes communicative competence a principal learning goal (Larsen-Freeman & Anderson, 2011). Intermediate Swedish II DILS is designed to maximize communication in Swedish inside and outside the classroom.

Communication is defined as the interpretation of meaning in speech and texts, the expression of meaning in speech and writing, and purposeful interaction between speakers (Van Patten, 2017). Students develop communication skills from their instructor and each other in conversations and through listening to Swedish on topics that are likely to interest them. They participate in learning activities, such as peer-to-peer interviews, role plays, debates, language games and topic research. Comprehensible input is provided in authentic texts, audio and video recordings. The selection of input is based on the criteria that it must be comprehensible, interactive, and engaging to students. Students practice new material in scaffolded activities in the large group or in small groups and pairs. As the class is small, working with all students in a large group has many advantages. There is enough time for everyone to speak, spontaneous conversation can take place, and students receive immediate feedback from the instructor and each other on the effectiveness of their communication. Individual work is saved for assignments outside of class, in reading and writing assignments and end-of-unit tasks.

SWED 2020 DILS uses a task-based approach to instruction. In language instruction, tasks are activities in which the interpretation and expression of meaning is primary (VanPatten, 2017). Students use their thoughts, feelings and opinions and content on subjects that is likely to interest them to create meaningful communication. These tasks are theme-based and consist of a progression of input and output-based activities that typically lead up to a final task, in which students demonstrate what they have learned. The tasks are multimodal. They involve the interpretation and expression of meaning in several or all five language modes (interpretive reading and listening, presentational speaking and writing, interpersonal communication). An example of a task in SWED 2020 DILS is creating printed campaign material for a Swedish political party for a study unit on the Swedish government and political system. Another example involves an oral presentation and Q&A session on a mythological figure in Nordic mythology. It is worth noting that the vocabulary assignments described in the portfolio pre-study are not language tasks. They are activities that make task completion possible. For example, the end-of-unit task associated with the pre-study Vocabulary List assignment is to create and tell a “*skröna*” (an untrue, mostly realistic story). Students incorporate words and expressions learned in the vocabulary assignment when writing their story. The vocabulary assignments are thus building blocks needed to complete the tasks, but have little communicative value in and of themselves.

## **Learning Outside the Classroom**

Since the class meets infrequently (3X50 min/week), classroom time focuses on only three of the five learning goals: to develop proficiency in interpretive listening, interpersonal communication, and presentational speaking. The other two learning goals, proficiency in interpretive reading and presentational writing, are attended to in out-of-class assignments.

Students are provided many opportunities to learn independently outside of class. *Rivstart B1B2*, a Swedish monolingual textbook and workbook series, are required texts in the course. Students work on select activities from this learning material on their own. The learning is enhanced with

a variety of current material provided on the course website, including study guides, video and film links, a discussion forum, links to useful websites and dictionaries, audio recordings and grammar and vocabulary notes. There is no lack of interesting authentic material for students to explore independently, whether they find their favorite topics on the Internet, in film or in print. Students are also encouraged to use supportive commercial applications to learn vocabulary, such as Duolingo and Quizlet. Furthermore, the instructor offers campus events that support language acquisition and interculturality throughout the semester, such as *fika* (Swedish coffee hour), a fitness class with instruction in Swedish, guest lectures, and cultural celebrations, such as Lucia celebration and Våffeldagen.

## Meeting Course Goals

Methods, materials and assignments assist the student in meeting the course goals in several ways. Unit assignments provide a mix of comprehensible input and level-appropriate output that introduces students to new content and provides opportunity for practice and demonstration of learning. The assignments are connected to learning objectives that are steps to the achievement of the **SWED2020 DILS learning goals**. The course learning goals are based on ACTFL standards. These goals are broken down into learning objectives that are attended to in the different study units. Each study unit has between 6 to 8 learning objectives per week, one or two for each learning mode plus grammar-focused and intercultural objectives. These objectives are expressed as Can-Do statements. For example, a course goal for presentational speaking is “to be able to make presentations on a wide variety of familiar topics using a series of connected sentences or short paragraphs”. This corresponds to an Intermediate High proficiency level in the ACTFL standards. This is a broad learning goal for an undefined number of content and context areas. Each study unit in SWED 2020 DILS will build skills towards this main goal. In a unit on Swedish history, two learning objectives associated with this particular course goal are “I can describe the location and exterior and interior features of 3 historic buildings in Stockholm“ and “I can describe the historical significance of these 3 historic buildings.” Students use the Can-Do statements for self-assessment of their progress. Students may use can-do statements for self-assessment of their progress. They can share their learning with their instructor by indicating whether they can do, can do with assistance, need more practice, or cannot do a particular action yet.

The learning objectives of the assignments in SWED 2020 DILS are connected to the overall course goals in the *interpretive, presentational and interpersonal communication* language modes. Students work on their ability to *interpret* the Swedish language by reading texts on one of our six major course themes. These themes are Regional Culture in the Swedish Provinces, Current News Media, Folklore and Storytelling, The Swedish Political System, Swedish History and Nordic Mythology. Texts may come from the course textbook or select webpages and documents posted to Canvas. The students also find their own material on the web. They build interpretive listening skills from audio recordings and video clips, films, and news media. Students work on their *presentational* skills in writing and speaking assignments focused on the study unit theme. They participate in discussion forums, e-mailing and texting, peer feedback sessions, and create multimodal presentations. *Interpersonal communication* skills are developed in whole class and small group activities and are also part of the multimodal presentations.

Since this course uses a standards-based approach to learning, keeping the learning outcome in focus is important in lesson and unit plan development. Each plan is designed to integrate the five modes of communication with meaningful and mainly authentic content and contextualized activities and tasks. Backward design is used in lesson and unit plan development. This method keeps the desired learning outcomes at the end of the class, unit and semester in focus. Another useful tool in choosing materials and activities for the course is a foreign language planning model based on Bloom's revised taxonomy. This model relates learning actions and corresponding types of activities to lower- and higher-order thinking (Shrum and Glisan, 2010). Aside from its use in curriculum planning, it serves as a reminder of the benefits of foreign language learning in the students' broader university education.

## Implementation of Vocabulary Assignments

As previously mentioned, key vocabulary for the theme-based tasks in SWED 2020 DILS study units was previously introduced in class during the first couple of meetings, while vocabulary enrichment took place in context throughout the study unit. Students would find vocabulary instructions on the course website prior to the first class of the week, so that they would familiarize themselves with the new vocabulary before coming to class. In the instructor's experience of previous courses, few students would take time to study the new vocabulary before class. A negative feedback loop was in place, in which valuable classroom time was spent on the introduction of key vocabulary, while students would choose not to study the new vocabulary before class, as they knew that the vocabulary would be covered in class. To improve the learning experience, pre-class assignments were implemented, and were followed up with reading and listening assessments in the classroom.

The instructional strategy of giving students assignments to prepare for their classroom interaction is characteristic of the *flipped classroom* (Brame, 2013). In the flipped classroom, students are first exposed to new knowledge outside of class, and class time is used for application and assimilation of this knowledge (Berrett, 2012). The *flipped classroom* model was helpful when thinking about how to restructure the course. As a result, pre-class vocabulary assignments were developed and the instruction in class was modified. The students were now first exposed to new content in out-of-class vocabulary and/or grammar assignments. The vocabulary was then practiced in the classroom in whole class and group activities, after which students moved on to apply the vocabulary in input- and output-based activities and tasks with analytical, evaluative and creative components.

### Vocabulary Assignments Details

- *The first pre-class vocabulary assignment was a structured vocabulary assignment.* Students were asked to complete an assignment in Quizlet. Quizlet is a free, commercial online learning tool, in which users play matching, sorting, spelling and translating games to help with vocabulary memorization. There is a simple listening tool that allows students to hear the pronunciation of words and phrases. The learning environment is multi-sensory and interactive. It lacks images and recording capacity. The vocabulary can be sorted into content areas. The vocabulary is presented out of context. In this assignment, students used the learning tool to familiarize themselves with the vocabulary by playing paired-associate, flashcard language

games in the learning tool. Grammatical information for each word was provided. The vocabulary was not contextualized. The tool provided students with direct feedback on their responses.

- *The second pre-class vocabulary assignment was also a structured vocabulary assignment.* Students were instructed to complete the assignment in VoiceThread. VoiceThread is an online learning tool that is integrated into the University of Colorado's learning management system. Students and instructors can create, share, and comment on images, videos, documents, using microphone, webcam, text, phone, and audio-file uploads in VoiceThread. The learning tool is interactive. Student can respond to queries and record their responses by voice or text. In this assignment, students read and listened to new vocabulary in context and were able to respond to questions in writing or speech. The assignment provided images and speech in addition to written text. Grammatical information was also provided. Direct feedback to students was provided in an associated quiz.
- *The third pre-class vocabulary assignment was an unstructured vocabulary assignment.* Students received a PDF document with a list of key vocabulary, examples of how the words are used in context, and grammatical information. No other supportive activities and tools were provided. Students memorized the vocabulary using their own learning strategies. This assignment did not provide any supportive images, recordings, interactive features, or direct feedback.

Participation in the study was voluntary.

## How the Learning Outcome was Assessed

The learning outcome on the pre-class vocabulary quizzes was assessed with reading and listening quizzes following each assignment. At the time of the assessment, the students had completed the vocabulary assignment independently and had also completed language tasks in the classroom that required familiarity with the new vocabulary. The quizzes assessed student performance on reading and listening comprehension tasks. The students read and listened to authentic texts and provided phrases and sentence-level responses to content questions.

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# Leonhardt-Lupa Portfolio - Student Work

## Data analysis

The small number of students in the sample limits data analysis to calculating average scores on the quantitative data and examining trends in the qualitative data. The study will need to be repeated before any significance can be established.

## Results

### Effects of Vocabulary Assignments on Student Performance

- Results from this small study suggest that there is no perceptible difference in learning scores between students that completed any of the individual vocabulary assignments, or even if they didn't complete any pre-assignment at all. However, the extremely low size of the test population makes it impossible to draw any definitive conclusions from this pre-study. This study will need to be repeated in future SWED 2020 DILS courses, but considering the small average class size, the results would not be expected to reach any level of significance for several years.
- The average scores on the reading/listening assessments were similar for all three vocabulary assignment types included in the pre-study (Vocabulary list, Quizlet, VoiceThread). No particular type of vocabulary assignment stood out as superior for learning.

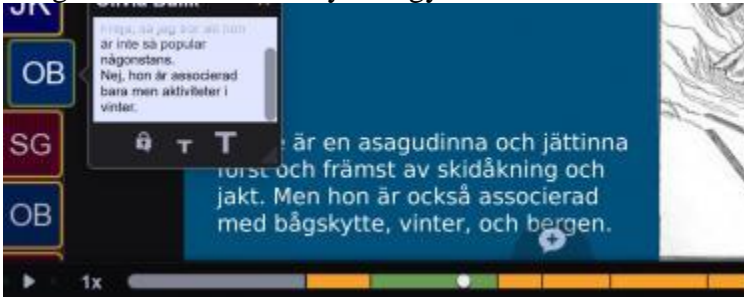
### Student Perceptions of Vocabulary Assignments

- The students had a positive perception of the pre-class vocabulary assignments. They found them helpful or very helpful for the classroom activities in the study units (image 1). Furthermore, they indicated that the assignments were useful or very useful for the interpretive reading/listening assessment associated with each assignment (image 2).

Image 1: VoiceThread Mythology I



Image 2: VoiceThread Mythology II



- The students had no clear preference for which specific type of vocabulary assignment they preferred. They indicated that all assignments were helpful or very helpful to them.
- The students found the vocabulary in the assignments either very useful or moderately useful for how they had intended to use Swedish in the future (image 3).

Image 3: VoiceThread Turistmal



Anna Öhlund/imagebank.sweden.se

- The vocabulary assignments were either very interesting or moderately interesting to most students. No students reported that the assignments didn't hold their interest at all (image 4).

Image 4: Quizlet



- The students indicated that they definitely or probably wanted to have more of any of the three assignments type. There was no consensus on which particular type of assignment students preferred. See **Student Survey Results**.

## Leonhardt-Lupa Portfolio - Reflections

The results of the changes made to the curriculum during the semester were encouraging.

Students responded positively to the introduction of the pre-class vocabulary assignments. They did not object to the increase in independent study time that this change entailed. As one student responded: "I like vocab assignments because they help me remember and keep track of new vocab." Another student wrote "I like how this activity showed the different forms/tenses of the word, provided the English translation, and also used the word in a sentence. I think seeing the word in a sentence really helped me on the quiz." Vocabulary assignments were clearly preferred to a "learn-as-you-go" approach, where all new vocabulary would be learned at the time it was encountered in texts, audio or conversations.

The students did not agree on which type of assignments they liked best. There was no clear preference for either one of the structured vocabulary assignments (Quizlet and VoiceThread) or the unstructured (vocabulary lists). Students appreciated when the assignments provided learning support such as interactivity and instant learning feedback, but there was no consensus on which type was preferred. It may be that offering a variety of assignments is a good way to satisfy differences in student preferences and learning styles.

The pre-study did not provide an answer to whether structured or unstructured pre-class vocabulary assignments were more effective for vocabulary learning. The students performed equally well on all three assignments. Given the low number of participating students, this was to be expected.

The question whether pre-class vocabulary assignments were more effective than no pre-class vocabulary assignments was not sufficiently answered. The students performed equally well on all assignments. It was interesting to note the high performance on assessments even when no supportive vocabulary assignments at all were administered. It is likely that these high-performing, motivated students possessed the necessary learning strategies to apply key vocabulary to interpretive tasks even without instructional support.

Why provide pre-class vocabulary assignments if there is no measurable effect on learning outcome? The reason these assignments were introduced in the first place was to free up more time in the classroom for student interaction in Swedish. In this regard, the pre-class assignments were a success. During the weeks when students had worked on the pre-class assignments and thus came to class prepared, less time was spent on vocabulary introduction. This left time for approximately one extra 10-minute interactive activity per class. In a 50-minute class, this is a significant gain.

The characteristics of effective assignments were identified as productive vocabulary memorization, measurable progression towards the course goals, ease of use, ability to hold students' interest and reasonable time expenditure for students and instructor. The three assignments introduced in this course all fulfilled these criteria. They will be considered for use in future SWED 2020 DILS courses.

To conclude, students who enroll in SWED 2020 DILS are generally motivated and competent language learners. Their achievements reflect their high motivation level. They tend to perform well on assessments, particularly on the high-stakes projects. Their excellence is reflected in the outcome of the pre-study. The results on the newly introduced vocabulary assignments and corresponding reading and writing assessments are encouraging, but it is too early to draw conclusions until further studies have been completed.