UNIVERSITY OF JYVÄSKYLÄ

PARENTS' PERCEPTIONS AND EXPERIENCES OF HOME AND SCHOOL COOPERATION IN ENGLISH TEACHING IN THE SECONDARY SCHOOL

A Pro Gradu Thesis

by

Heidi Wass

Department of Languages
2008

Kodin ja koulun yhteistyöhön on viime vuosina kiinnitetty yhä enemmän huomiota. Aiemmissa tutkimuksissa on tutkittu kodin ja koulun yhteistyötä alakoulussa, usein opettajien näkökulmasta. Opettajankoulutusta koskevassa tutkimuksessa on havaittu kodin ja koulun yhteistyöhön oppimisen ja siinä kehittymisen jäävän suurelta osin työelämän tehtäväksi. Kodin ja koulun välillä tehtävää yhteistyötä Suomessa säätelevät paitsi Suomen laki, myös *Perusopetuksen opetussuunnitelman perusteet* (2004) sekä koulukohtaiset opetussuunnitelmat.

Tämän tutkielman tarkoituksena oli selvittää, millaisia käsityksiä ja kokemuksia vanhemmilla on kodin ja koulun yhteistyöstä yläkoulun englanninopetuksessa. Tutkimuksessa selvitettiin, miten vanhemmat suhtautuvat kodin ja koulun yhteistyöhön ja millä keinoilla yhteistyötä oli tehty englanninopetuksen osalta. Tämän lisäksi tutkittiin, millainen vanhempien mielestä olisi kodin ja koulun välisen yhteistyön ihannetilanne englannin opetuksessa.

Tutkimusaineisto kerättiin kyselylomakkeella, joka toimitettiin etelärannikolla sijaitsevassa kunnassa 223 peruskoulun yhdeksäsluokkalaisen vanhemmalle. Kyselylomakkeista palautui 149, jotka muodostivat tutkimuksen aineiston. Aineisto analysoitiin kvantitatiivisin menetelmin, ja tulokset raportoitiin frekvensseinä sekä prosentteina. Avokysymys koskien ihannetilannetta kodin ja koulun yhteistyössä analysoitiin kvalitatiivisesti ja kvantitatiivisesti. Mittareiden sisäinen yhtenäisyys selvitettiin Cronbachin alphoilla.

Tutkimuksessa selvisi, että vanhemmat suhtautuivat positiivisesti kodin ja koulun yhteistyöhön englannin opetuksessa. Tästä huolimatta yhteistyötä ei ollut tehty paljon. Suurimmaksi yhteistyötä estäväksi tekijäksi he kokivat sen, ettei englannin opettaja ollut tehnyt aloitetta yhteistyöhön. Tärkeimpinä tiedonlähteinä englannin opetusta koskien he pitivät lastaan, englannin koearvosanoja sekä englannin oppikirjoja. He toivoivat saavansa englannin opiskelusta monipuolista tietoa, mieluiten kirjallisessa muodossa. Vanhemmat kokivat saavansa usein tietoa lapsensa englannin arvosanoista. Erityisen tärkeäksi he kokivat yhteistyön kodin ja koulun välillä silloin, kun oppilaalla oli ongelmia tai vaikeuksia englannin kielen opiskelussa.

Asiasanat: English teaching, home and school, parents, secondary school

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1 INTRODUCTION

Home and school cooperation is part of a teacher's job. Involving parents in their children's schooling is a demanding task and a common source for uncertainty and apprehension. Teachers do not feel that they receive an adequate amount of training in teacher education to carry out cooperation with homes. In secondary school, where pupils are going through puberty, teaching can be demanding as problems and challenges in teaching, unknown in elementary school, can arise. Therefore there is often a need for teachers to unite their strengths with parents to support a pupil's healthy growth and development. Parents have been found to appreciate cooperation with teachers in elementary school, but the amount of cooperation decreases as pupils enter secondary school. The subject-teacher system has been found to be one of the main reasons for the lesser amount of cooperation.

In Finland, home and school cooperation is seen as the responsibility of the schools. The organization and forms of cooperation are regulated in the Finnish law and in the National Core Curriculum (hence forward the NCC). Moreover, schools are to compile their own local curricula to among other things further detail how home and school cooperation will be carried out. This leads often to general guidelines and there can easily be misunderstandings about the person responsible for involving parents in the life of the school. Furthermore, schools can implement a variety of different means and communication channels as they are given the opportunity to decide for themselves how cooperation in carried out.

Previous studies have focused on home and school cooperation from the viewpoint of teachers or pupils. Moreover, secondary school has not often been the research interest of studies concerning cooperation in the field of education. Instead, a wealth of studies has been conducted in elementary school, especially in the first grades.
No study has attempted to examine cooperation in a specific school subject or, as in this case, in English teaching.

In the present study, parents' perceptions and experiences of home and school cooperation in English teaching in the secondary school are investigated. The aim is to examine whether

parents have a positive attitude toward cooperation, and do they feel that it can positively influence the pupil, his or her healthy growth, academic achievement and English language learning. Also the ideal state of home and school cooperation from the point of view of parents will be investigated. Moreover, the intention is to study the forms and frequency of cooperation.

The study was conducted with a questionnaire in two schools in the town of Kotka. The results of the two schools are not compared to each other as it was one of the prerequisites for receiving the approval for conducting this study in the schools. The results will be analyzed quantitatively by using statistical analysis.

In this study, the distinctive features of teaching teenagers and involving parents in that process will be discussed (chapter 2). The nation-wide ordainments and regulations for home and school cooperation in the Finnish law and in the National Core Curriculum will be examined in chapter 3. Moreover, the situation of home and school cooperation in local curricula and in the curricula of the schools of the present study will be discussed. The final background chapter (4) deals with the previous studies and literature on reported advantages and disadvantages of home and school cooperation. The methodological choices of this study will be reported in chapter 5. The results will be presented along with tables and figures (chapter 6). There will be a discussion of the results and a consideration on the possible implications of the findings in chapter 7.

2 TEACHING TEENAGERS

Teaching teenagers is a challenging task. The majority of adolescents go through puberty during their secondary school years, that is, grades 7-9 (Aho and Rinkinen 2005). Puberty is a psychological, social, and physical transition from childhood to adulthood and characterised by change, shifting beliefs and emotions (Kolehmainen 1992: 114). Puberty is bound to have an effect on the school work in secondary schools as teenagers struggle to construct their identity and gradually become independent. The relationships of teenagers with their parents, teachers and peers can become more complicated due to the emotional distress caused by the changes in the adolescents' lives. In some cases, puberty may bring along behavioural problems, leading to difficulties both at home and in school. Adolescents may show a lack of motivation and can underperform academically. Therefore, the need for support from significant adults in spare time and during school time is evident (Kauppinen and Koivu 2000).

In the following, the impact of adolescence on school work will be examined to illustrate some of the distinctive features of secondary school pupils particularly in Finland. These features are concurrently examined in the light of English teaching in section 2.1. Second, acknowledging the parents' role as experts in knowing their child will be examined in section 2.2. In addition, utilizing parental expertise in the form of support for the pupils' growth and education will be discussed in section 2.2. Third, making use of this parental knowledge in education in the form of a partnership will be discussed in section 2.3. Examining the above-mentioned topics is of primary importance to the present study since it aims at investigating whether parents are granted the possibility to engage in reciprocal communication with education professionals in English teaching in secondary school.

In the following, the term *home* is used to cover the terms parents, family and household. The term *parent* is used to avoid ambiguities and hence forward includes the meanings of both biological parenthood and legal guardianship or a caretaker. Correspondingly, the term *school* is used to refer to teachers and education in general, and the terms *pupil*, *child* and *adolescent* often overlap or are used interchangeably.

2.1 Teenagers in school

Secondary school teachers should be familiar with the key features and developmental challenges of puberty in order to relate to the pupils and to identify and express social messages such as emotions (Talib 2002: 58). Students in teacher education do not feel that they receive an adequate amount of training in working with adolescents in school (Jussila and Saari 1999: 43), suggesting that not all teachers, especially soon after graduation, are equipped with the skills necessary for forming and having the kind of a close and open relationship with pupils as they would need during puberty. All pupils should be seen as individuals with their own personality, temperament and way of learning (Uusikylä 2003: 135) and teachers need to offer them learning experiences that meet their needs at the time (Ekebom et al. 2000: 114). This is especially true of English teaching, as it in secondary school aims at providing pupils with more language learning strategies bearing in mind their developmental level (National Core Curriculum 2004: 141).

In secondary school pupils face two major challenges in the form of puberty and a demanding school environment. Pupils can be characterised by self-importance, emotional instability and uncertainty although individual differences are significant (Paananen 1985: 56, 118). Adolescents see their teachers as authorities that are to be resisted (Förbom 2003: 72), are impatient and show little task-endurance (Ekebom et al. 2000: 114). This can be explained by the fact that adolescents are subject to constant pressures and expectations not only from teachers, but from their parents and classmates as well. These often inconsistent expectations can cause confusion and thus contribute to the difficulties in adolescents' school work (Paananen 1985: 138), therefore complicating their English studies as well.

Secondary school is more stressful for pupils than elementary school due to the fact that they undergo puberty in their secondary school years (Paananen 1985: 56). On the other hand, the amount of parental surveillance and support tends to decrease as pupils enter their teens (Hepworth-Berger 1981: 4, OECD 1997: 46). The present study aims at investigating whether this claim is accurate in English teaching in secondary school. In their younger school years, pupils are seen as passive targets for the care-giving of parents and educational institutions,

such as day care and elementary school (Kinnunen 1999:41). In secondary school, pupils are seen as more active in the educational process and they are given greater responsibility and freedom. It has been argued that premature adolescent independence is a common ideal in both parenting and education in Finland. Letting adolescents do their schoolwork without surveillance and guidance has been seen by parents as supporting their independence (Koistinen 2005: 143). Giving adolescents more freedom has been seen as leading to strong adulthood. However, teenage pupils still need guidance and support in their school work (Hiila 2005: 5-6).

The school work load is multiplied as subjects are taught in more detail than in elementary school. In English teaching, language skills are developed in more demanding social situations and the amount of written language is increased (NCC 2004: 141). Pupils are also expected to realize the significance of constant communication practice (NCC 2004: 141). In other words, adolescents need to work harder in English teaching in secondary school than in elementary school. This can feel overwhelming, leading to difficulties especially if a pupil is accustomed to managing academically with little effort. For instance, English study books and materials are more demanding in secondary school than in elementary school. Learning to do school work consistently and patiently in secondary school can be complicated if one has not acquired the routines necessary for goal-oriented studying already in elementary school, in particular as teachers in secondary school expect one to complete tasks and assignments relatively independently with little surveillance (Paananen 1985: 138).

2.2 Parents as experts in knowing their child

Parents can be regarded as *experts* in knowing and parenting their child. Parents also consider themselves experts of their child and family (Alasuutari 2003:114). The present study seeks to examine whether this parental expertise is valued and taken into account in English teaching in secondary school. Parents' relationship with the child is unique. They have the closest emotional bond to the child and have the most opportunities to influence his or her development (Alaja 1997: 80-81). They are primary care-givers and as their children's legal guardians, they are responsible for their well-being because their psychological development

and well-being are principally connected with the family (Alasuutari 2003: 16). The expertise of significant adults involved in the child's life in puberty needs to be applied into practice in both parenting and schooling (Strömmer 2005: 49). Educational professionals are obliged to support the parenting of children (Alaja 1997: 84). This is done mainly by appreciating the values, views and expectations the parents have (Valtanen 2000: 135).

Parents' unique relationship with the child can be highlighted when compared to the relationships teachers and other professionals have with the child. The professionals are involved with many children simultaneously, their involvement is based on professional interest and obligation, and it lasts only for a limited period of time. In contrast, the parents' involvement in the life of the child is personal, emotional, lifelong, and focused exclusively on one child or more (Hegarty 1993: 119). In other words, the parents' reactions and feelings will be more intense when a child's behaviour, learning and performance are concerned (Cunningham and Davis 1985: 18). Then again, the professionals can be more objective in regard to the difficulties of an individual child as they are not as emotionally attached (Paananen 1985: 133) and do not tend to idealize the child as parents do (Alaja 1997: 38).

School is one of the places where parents meet educational professionals (Strömmer 2005:45). As the child's primary advocate, the parent is first and foremost accountable in all situations in the child's life and schooling (Hoikkala 1993: 237), having thus the responsibility to express concerns to the teachers and other professionals. The parents' expertise is needed especially when the child encounters difficulties in school.

People need to rely on others' expertise as one can only acquire a limited repertoire of skills. In an educational context, this means that both parents and teachers need to accept the dependence on others' skills and knowledge (Hegarty 1993: 119). Parents' trust in the professionals is based on their perceived academic and scientific competence, skills and experience (Airaksinen 1998: 6). Parents often cannot observe how their child behaves and works in a large peer group (Paananen 1985: 142). Teachers do not have the access to see the child in the home environment as intensively as the parents. Therefore it is both economic and

efficient for both parties to share their expertise with each other (Cunningham and Davis 1985: 4).

The way the educational professionals view the expertise held by the parents is the starting point for potential communication and cooperation with homes. Sharing of knowledge to reach a mutual goal is the foundation for partnership between home and school (Cunningham and Davis 1985: 15), which creates new forms of expertise to be applied into practice for the best of the child (Salminen 2005: 171).

2.3 Parents as partners

Partnership is a broadly used term in the educational context to define the relationship between parents and teachers (Bastiani 1993: 104), forming thus an important starting point for the present study. In short, *partnership* implies a sharing of information, responsibility, skills and decision making (Pugh 1989: 5). Partnering with parents is essential for all schools. Schools have an obligation to work with all parents (Bastiani 1993: 109, Basic Education Act 628/1998). This obligation is not only legal but professional as well since schools cannot function without the involvement and support of parents (Bastiani 1993: 109). The main objective of the present study is to examine whether this obligation is fulfilled in English teaching in secondary school.

It is crucial for educational professionals to be aware of the objectives of home and school cooperation in order for them to motivate the parents of secondary school pupils to participate in their children's education and thus become partners. Parents have been found to be less involved in the schooling of their children as they enter secondary school (Hepworth-Berger 1981: 4, OECD 1997: 46) although their participation and interest in the education of the adolescents is very much needed. Since the benefits of partnerships are directed at the child, it should increase the motivation of both schools and the homes to cooperate (Alasuutari 2003: 91). The objective of partnerships between home and school is to support the child and to facilitate his or her learning (Hegarty 1993: 122). Both parents and teachers need to have reasonable sets of expectations which will facilitate partnership to become a reality (Kasama

and Tett 2001: 231) and these expectations need to be made explicit (Cunningham and Davis 1985: 17).

There can be numerous reasons for parents to get involved in the schooling of their child. One of these reasons can be the benefits of parent and teacher partnership. The benefits of these relationships between home and school are lasting not only in formal schooling, but in other aspects of children's learning and development (Bastiani 1993: 104). According to Bastiani (1993: 104), this means that the positive consequences of home and school cooperation, such as the success, are transferable to other areas of the child's life, for instance, further education. The present study aims at examining the perceptions that parents of secondary school pupils hold of the benefits of the home and school cooperation. On the European level it has been reported that parents wish to improve the child's performance, feel the desire to know more about the school and may want to influence the curriculum (OECD 1997:27-28).

In secondary school, the challenges set by puberty and the change from elementary school requires multifaceted means of cooperation both inside and outside the school environment (Kauppinen and Koivu 2000). School and home have partially different duties in guiding the child's development and growth. However, both of them should be engaged in developing the adolescent's personality and supporting academic achievement and mental health (Kauppinen and Koivu 2000). Knowing the pupil well helps the teacher to relate to him or her and to understand him or her when difficulties or problems occur. Knowing how the background contributes to the individual differences between pupils helps the teacher to socialize him or her to the class and social environment in school (Soininen 1986: 1). On the other hand, the home needs multifaceted information on the educational goals of the schools. Furthermore, the parents need to know who the people guiding the child are, how the studies are arranged and how the pupil performs in school (Aho 1980: 4-5).

Partnerships are based on honest and clear two-way communication. The forms and frequency of this communication fall in the scope of the present study. Acknowledging the importance of communication in cooperation supports the view that partnership is not a method, it is a set of actions (Aho 1980: 10). Failing to connect these two separate worlds can have a negative

effect on a pupil's education (Hegarty 1993: 119). Most of the parents' complaints concern information that is insufficient or inaccurate (Cunningham and Davis 1985: 4) whereas teachers providing the information that parents desire has been found to increase their trust in teachers (Kasama and Tett 2001: 229). Both home and school need to exchange information openly. In exchanging information, covering a range of means of communication, such as written materials and face-to-face dialogue, is likely to be the best practice (Hegarty 1993: 121). The school needs information on the parental attitudes and the means of parenting. This can mean the expectations they have of the school, their home environment, health and hobbies (Aho 1980: 4).

Teachers can use the information received on a pupil's difficulties at home to guide parents help him or her (Hegarty 1993: 120). For instance, they could provide advice and customized forms of remedial teaching in English to be carried out at home. In addition, teachers can gain useful information on how the pupil learns at home and elsewhere outside the school surroundings. This helps teachers to apply more effective teaching methods. Parents can also be involved in monitoring the child's progress in learning English. This helps the teacher to see how well the skills acquired in school are transferred into other contexts (Hegarty 1993: 126). On the other hand, parents can also help to consolidate and extend language learning in out-of-school contexts and activities and thus facilitate learning (Beveridge 2005: 61).

The present study also examines the possible obstacles perceived by parents in home and school cooperation in English teaching in secondary school. The professionals need to remember that not all parents know how to partner with professionals in education. Not all parents have an in-built schema of how to share the duties and responsibilities in a child's education and upbringing with professionals. In other words, they are not aware of their roles and the roles of the professionals in the child's life (Alasuutari 2003: 27-28).

3 HOME AND SCHOOL COOPERATION

Home and school cooperation consists of a series of actions and different forms of communication between parents and teachers. The Finnish Law determines the contents and the codes of conduct in compulsory schooling. Therefore, also the fundamental principles and objectives of cooperation between home and school derive from the *Basic Education Act 628/1998* (Fi. Perusopetuslaki) and are further detailed in the *Basic Education Regulation 852/1998* (Fi. Perusopetusasetus). The Finnish Law sets out the basic framework for compulsory schooling, which is then specified in detail in the *NCC* (Fi. Perusopetuksen opetussuunnitelman perusteet). It aims at giving recommendations to be applied in practice in basic education. The NCC also lays a duty on all schools to do their own local curricula. In the local curricula, schools explicitly state their values, objectives and contents of teaching. Among other things, they also describe the framework for working with homes.

The following chapter will examine the guidelines set for home and school cooperation in Finland. This will serve as a foundation for the present study as it aims at examining the extent to which home and school cooperation is arranged in accordance with the existing guidelines and duties. First, home and school cooperation will be discussed in section 3.1 on a rather general level to examine what it consists of. Second, the fundamental principles, duties and obligations for home and school cooperation as provided in the Finnish Law will be examined in section 3.2. Third, the nation-wide recommendations and guidelines for home and school cooperation in the National Core Curriculum will be discussed in section 3.3. Fourth, there will be a general summary in section 3.4 of the preparation and composition of local curricula in order to examine what guides the curriculum compilation process and the way home and school cooperation is dealt with in it. In particular, the curricula of the two schools of the present study will be outlined in order to investigate how they address home and school cooperation. In the present study *co-operation* is used interchangeably with *partnering, collaborating* and *working together*. Similarly, *home and school* and *teachers and parents* are used correspondingly.

3.1 Defining home and school cooperation

The following aims at defining and describing the contents and forms of home and school cooperation in secondary school. An attempt to define cooperation is important for the present study as unclear definitions of cooperation have been mentioned as a problem in previous research (Aho 1980: 10). The present definition relies to a great extent on the typology presented by Hegarty (1993: 117-120) who divides the areas of cooperation between home and school into five categories: *communication, curriculum, assessment, personal support* and *liaison with other agencies*. According to Hegarty, liaison with other agencies means engaging special education professionals, such as special education teachers, therapists and school psychologists, in the cooperation. Since the aspects of special educational needs do not fall in the scope of the present study, liaison with other agencies will be excluded from the following attempt to define home and school cooperation. First, *communication* between home and school will be presented as a starting point and a basis for cooperation. Second, the connection between *school curriculum* and home-school cooperation will be discussed. Third, the role of *pupil assessment* in home and school cooperation will be examined. Fourth, *personal support* between parents and teachers as an element in home and school cooperation will be discussed.

3.1.1 Communication

Home and school cooperation relies to a great extent on an exchange of information. Knowing what kind of information homes need is of primary importance since enhancing and developing the flow of information between home and school can be seen as the ultimate goal in cooperation (Aho 1980: 2). Good lines of communication require that parents and teachers know each other well and eagerly contact each other in matters concerning the child's education (Kauppinen and Koivu 2000).

If parents are actively well-informed of the child's learning requirements and needs at the secondary school level, they can contribute to enhancing his or her attitudes toward school and learning English. In addition, the enhanced exchange of information between parents and

teachers can lead to improved learning outcomes and post-secondary schooling options (Korpinen 1977: 77). Furthermore, it helps to anticipate problems and resolve them if they should arise (Hegarty 1993: 122). Therefore it is fair to say that communication between home and school meets the requirement of facilitating a pupil's learning and developing, being thus an essential part of home and school cooperation.

Previous research has not addressed home and school cooperation in secondary school in one particular school subject. Therefore the previous studies presented in the following are general in nature but serve as a foundation for the attempt of the present study to acquire similar kind of information on cooperation in English teaching. Research has been done in secondary schools to investigate what kind of information parents wish to receive (Korpinen 1977, Aho 1980). These studies revealed that parents wanted information mainly on their child's behaviour in school, such as his or her ability to concentrate, persistence and participation in teaching (Korpinen 1977: i-iii). What is more, parents wished to know how their child was getting along with teachers and whether the child was making progress or having difficulties in different subjects. The child's happiness at school and health were also information wanted by parents (Korpinen 1977: iii). A study by Aho (1980) discovered that parents were interested in disciplinary problems and sanctions in class and the assessment criteria used by teachers. It is of note that parents wished to obtain more detailed information on their child's progress in different fields than teachers considered necessary (Korpinen 1977: vi).

Giving information to parents was the third most important element in cooperation according to both parents and teachers (Korpinen, Korpinen and Husso 1980a: ii). In spite of this, parents are commonly contacted only when something is amiss (Berger 1981: 105). To illustrate this, parents are informed when the pupil has unauthorized absences or has damaged school property. This kind of communication that concentrates on forwarding information regarding a pupil's misbehaviour is the most modest form of communication and by no means the objective of home and school cooperation (Vuorinen 2000: 21). Parents can also be contacted at other times than when the pupil is facing difficulties. The present study addresses this by examining whether parents receive positive feedback concerning their child's English

studies. Thus parents can support the child's school work in the best way possible (Förbom 2003: 95).

A wide range of means of communication can be used to carry out home and school cooperation. Poor communication is a common source for criticism as parents tend to complain about insufficient and/or inaccurate information (Cunningham and Davis 1985: 4). The present study attempts to examine whether parents perceive communication and information flow with the English teacher unsatisfactory. Implementing different means and forms of communication might help in decreasing the number of complaints from parents. However, the efficiency of home and school cooperation should be determined by quality instead of the amount or frequency of communication and other actions related to cooperation (Aho 1980: 66). A wide range of means of communication can range from written materials to face-to-face discussions and from school open days to group meetings (Hegarty 1993: 121).

According to a study by Paananen (1986), parents considered discussions at school, written notes from school and scheduled consultation hours with teachers to be the most popular means of communication whereas home visits were not longed-for. In fact, less than half of the parents felt positively about home visits. Another controversial technique for meeting the parents is to arrange parent-teacher conferences at school. They tend to have a number of participants and may cause anxiety in parents who are not used to talking in front of a crowd. Therefore they should be used for merely informing parents and alternate means should be sought for meeting, listening and talking with them. Conferences with a fewer number of participants have received more positive feedback (Kemppinen 2001: 69).

Written notes have evident benefits since they are permanent and can be read many times in order to prevent ambiguities (Hegarty 1993: 121). Therefore the information on written messages needs to be accurate and relevant. Educational jargon should be avoided as it can be confusing to parents (Förbom 2003: 95). However, as the notes and messages are often carried by adolescents, there is a possibility that notes can be delayed or missing (Barton 1998: 202).

3.1.2 Curriculum

Home and school cooperation can serve the local curricula in two ways. First, parents can be advised and informed of the contents of the curriculum in English teaching, such as the codes of conduct, support systems and available courses in the school. Second, the parents' opinions and expertise can be used to enrich and develop the local curriculum and English instruction. Their knowledge, comments and feedback can be gathered systematically and analyzed when revising the English curriculum or parents' input can be implemented directly to English teaching.

Parents should be informed of the contents of English courses available instead of providing them with unspecified lists of subjects and courses. Especially when parents choose elective language courses for their child, they need to know what the courses include, how they are assessed and whether they function as prerequisites for some additional courses (Hegarty 1993, Soininen 1986). As a consequence, parents will be able to make informed choices in planning their child's schooling (Soininen 1986: 38). Hegarty (1993: 121) states that information concerning the local curriculum should be in written form but it has to be kept in mind that the formal language of curriculum statements and reports can be difficult for some parents to comprehend.

Home and school cooperation can also enrich and improve English instruction by using parents' expertise and knowledge. English teachers can alter tasks to meet the needs and skills of pupils from diverse backgrounds by using talk for connecting with pupils and communicating with parents. Doing so requires that teachers know their pupils' backgrounds and the socio-cultural contexts they come from (McCarthey 1999: 92-93). For instance, the parents of children who do not speak Finnish as their mother tongue can be used as a resource in language lessons to talk about their relation to language learning. Thus, parents can be seen as enrichment to the curriculum and planning and implementing of instruction.

3.1.3 Assessment

Assessment is a field of cooperation that can create tensions between home and school.
Assessment often emphasizes the divide between lay and professional, or as in this case,
between parents and teacher. Teachers tend to use technical language when reporting
assessment outcomes and they often implement formal testing methods which can make
parents feel frustrated and excluded from the cooperation process (Hegarty 1993: 125). The
adequacy of information concerning pupil evaluation criteria and assessment outcomes falls
in the scope of the present study and is therefore discussed in the following.

A study by Räty et al. (2000) yielded that 99 % of the parents found it important to receive
information of the progress of their child. They are not as interested in comparing the child to
the achievement of other children in the class (Aho 1980: 27). This supports the significance
of evaluation as a means of providing the pupil and his or her parents with information on
progress in language learning and development so that they can further facilitate his or her
learning. Thereby receiving information on assessment outcomes is the right of both the pupil
and the parents (Atjonen 2005: 63).

Assessment is important to pupils as it has an effect on their self-image, learning strategies
and motivation (Eloranta 2000: 71). However, receiving information on assessment outcomes
is important to parents as well. A study by Korpinen (1977: vi) showed that parents
emphasized the guiding functions of evaluation, such as using assessment outcomes as
assistance when choosing appropriate post-secondary education for their child. Conversely,
teachers stressed the importance of assessment in finding learning difficulties of individual
children at an early stage. It is important to note that parents and teachers hold slightly
different opinions on the usefulness of assessment. This notion could be used when
developing the assessment process in English teaching and reporting assessment outcomes to
parents in a way that best meets their demands and needs.

Parents are interested in the pupil's general and subject-specific progress at school, and this
information should be provided also in other forms than report cards and numerical grades

(Paananen 1985: 153). Information on assessment outcomes should be in written form (Hegarty 1993: 121) but the written information can be complemented and detailed in face-to-face meetings with teacher, parents and pupil where a pupil's progress and achievement can be discussed in person (Valtanen 2000). It is important for parents to hear about the strengths and abilities of their child (Ekebom et al. 2000: 23).

3.1.4 Personal support

The following brief definition of personal support in home and school cooperation examines home and school cooperation as a means to help parents support their children in school work and particularly in learning English. Parents expect the school to respect the values of the home and to accept diversity in children (Paananen 1985: 154). What is more, they expect teachers to have time to talk about their children, help the parents get to know each other and to answer their questions and guide them in their problems (Paananen 1985: 154).

Parents are needed to support and encourage the child's school work on an emotional and affective level that cannot be reached by educational professionals. For instance, parents can help children understand the importance of language learning, utility and status better than teachers (Bertram 2006: 211). Some learning tasks require the expertise and guidance of parents, and their daily interest and involvement in the child's homework is irreplaceable (Ekebom et al. 2000: 23). Teaching is more specialised in secondary school than in elementary school. Therefore parents may feel that they are not competent enough to help adolescents in their schooling (Stevenson and Baker 1987: 1356, OECD 1997: 28) and thus can perceive their English skills inadequate for helping their child. Parents should have the possibility to receive support, encouragement and practical instructions for becoming more involved in secondary school (Valde 2000: 117). In other words, parents could be used to support their child if only they were given the chance and guidance how to do so.

Finnish teachers and parents have similar views on cooperation between home and school as a means of supporting an individual child rather than supporting the whole class. A study by Korpinen, Korpinen and Husso (1980) conducted in elementary school discovered that

parents found cooperation most important when choosing their child's upper secondary education. Secondly, they wanted cooperation to increase both parents' and teachers' understanding of a pupil's behaviour, which was seen as a priority by the teachers (Korpinen, Korpinen and Husso 1980a: ii). On the international level, research has shown that "keeping parents informed and involved" (OECD 1997: 51) is one of the schools' most important duties. Next, the importance and outlining of this duty in the Finnish law will be discussed.

3.2 Home and school cooperation in the Finnish Law

Basic Education legislation from the year 1998 provides for compulsory schooling, that is, all children 6 to16 years of age (The BE Act 628/1998 section 1, Uusikylä 2003: 124). The Basic Education Act came into force in January 1999. Therefore, the schools of the present study have been under the rule of this legislation and it has been implemented throughout the secondary schooling of the pupils in the sample.

The term *teaching* has a wide meaning in the legislation as all aspects of education and activities related to it, including home and school cooperation, are collected under this term (Pirhonen and Salo 1999: 107). Home and school have the obligation of working together in order to provide all pupils with teaching, guidance and support that meets their individual and age-specific needs and capabilities. A strong emphasis lies on diagnosing learning difficulties at an early stage, learning and teaching cooperative social skills and avoiding alienation in society (Pirhonen and Salo 1999: 108).

The BE Act does not go to lengths in separating between different school subjects or age groups. Instead, it focuses on giving all-purpose guidelines to be applied in teaching. Some guiding principles on organizing cooperation between home and school are given also in the Basic Education Regulation 852/1998 (hence forward the BE Regulation). However, the legislation lays a duty on the National Board of Education to provide more detailed information for education providers and schools. It is stated (the BE Act 628/1998 section 14) that: "The National Board of Education shall determine the objectives and core contents

and... the basic principles of home-school cooperation and pupil welfare under the purview of the local education authority." In other words, there are further recommendations in the NCC about the way home and school cooperation should be organized and carried out.

The BE Act section 3 provides for home and school cooperation in a wide-ranging manner. It is stated that cooperation should be done and the means of cooperation should be further determined in local curricula (Pirhonen and Salo 1999: 37). In other words, it leaves it up to the education providers to decide what forms and means of cooperation to use in their everyday work. In practice, these decisions are made in schools and can result in individual teachers using somewhat different means of cooperation (Lahtinen et al. 2006: 110). Despite this freedom given to schools at the local level, the Basic Education legislation aims at governing and thus maintaining equality in education in different parts of the country (Pirhonen and Salo 1999: 46).

The vast majority of legislation related to cooperation between home and school is noticeably concerned with forwarding information. Legislation gives recognition to the rights of parents to receive information and consultation from school (Beveridge 2005: 61). Most of the information to be forwarded from school is related to assessment standards and assessment outcomes. School is also obliged to notify parents of the sanctions a pupil receives, preferably before measures are taken (the BE Act 628/1998 section 31 a, Pirhonen and Salo 1999: 47). Pupils can be left to do their homework after school under supervision if they have neglected doing them at home (the BE Act 628/1998 section 36). A pupil's absences need to be monitored and unauthorized absences are to be reported to the parent (the BE Act 628/1998, section 26).

Parents and pupils have the right to know the criteria of assessment beforehand and how they are applied in assessing the individual child's progress and learning (the BE Act 628/1998 section 10-14; Ekebom et al. 2000: 27; Lahtinen et al. 2006: 431). Both parents and pupils themselves should also be given an adequate amount of information sufficiently often on the pupil's progress, achievement and behaviour. How this information is delivered to parents is not stated in the legislation. However, the Law lays a duty on schools to give at least one

report card at the end of each academic year (the BE Act section 10) and obliges the National Board of Education to determine the information to be recorded in report cards. Furthermore, the local curricula need to regulate how additional information on assessment outcomes is forwarded to parents. Some legal experts suggest sending report cards along the year, meeting personally with the parents or sending letters to homes (Pirhonen and Salo 1999: 44-45).

Parents are responsible for ensuring that a pupil completes compulsory schooling (the BE Act 628/1998 section 45). In order for them to be able to do so, they have the right to receive information that helps them in fulfilling this responsibility. For instance, parents have the right to be consulted before a pupil is admitted or transferred to special education (the BE Act 628/1998 section 17). In addition, parents should be given an opportunity to be heard before a pupil is made to repeat a year class (the BE Act 628/1998 section 22). Parent makes decisions concerning the choice of subjects (the BE Act 628/1998 section 30).

On the one hand, the Basic Education legislation emphasizes the public nature of education. On the other hand, the requirements for confidentiality are present in the Law as well. All teaching in basic education is open and public (the BE Act 628/1998 section 19) and a person may be denied the right to follow education only for well-founded reasons, such as aggressive behaviour. Basically it means that everyone, including parents, has the right to come to school and observe lessons purely out of interest without giving any reasons for coming into the classroom (Lahtinen et al. 2006: 204-205). Whether they exercise this right is examined later in the present study.

3.3 Home and school cooperation in the National Core Curriculum

What is ordained in the Finnish Law is then rewritten in the NCC, compiled and authorized by the National Board of Education. The NCC is a nation-wide framework for governing education in accordance with the Basic Education legislation. The NCC is to be followed when drawing up local curricula in all schools that provide basic education (Pirhonen and Salo 1999: 134). The NCC is a directive that should be obeyed in a similar manner as the

Law. The most recent NCC was issued in 2004 and all schools had to accept it by August 2006 by producing their own local curricula as ruled in the NCC (Pirhonen and Salo 1999: 105-106).

There are four issues that are taken into account in the NCC for giving recommendations for cooperation between home and school. First, it stresses that the school should be the party taking initiative in accomplishing a functioning relationship with homes (NCC 2004: 20). Second, the NCC describes some of the elements a good cooperative relationship requires, e.g. mutual respect, understanding and equality (NCC 2004: 20). Third, it gives reasons for cooperation. For example, it claims that teachers learn to know their pupils better when working together with parents, which in its turn helps planning and implementing instruction (NCC 2004: 20). Fourth, cooperation can be seen to be useful especially when a student leaves compulsory schooling. The NCC (2004: 20) declares that pupils' further education should be discussed together with parents and guidance counsellors along with various other experts of pupil welfare.

The principles of assessment drawn up in the NCC state that the pupil and his or her parent or other guardian are to be informed in advance about the criteria for assessment and, upon request, to receive an explanation afterwards of how those criteria have been applied in the assessment (the NCC 2004: 260). Again, the NCC does not separate between different school subjects but gives all-purpose guidelines to be applied in teaching in all subjects. In addition to the yearly school report cards, the pupil and his or her parent are to be given assessment feedback adequately and in a diverse manner. Information is to be provided about the pupil's individual progress and strengths and areas that need improvement (the NCC 2004: 261).

English teachers have a wide autonomy in interpreting the NCC and then applying it in practice through the local curricula. Teachers have a broad methodological freedom in choosing how they put their interpretation of the NCC into words in the local curricula and then carry out their English teaching and home and school cooperation. This freedom is granted to teachers because they are respected as trained professionals (Atjonen 2005: 60). This kind of wide-ranging autonomy has accentuated teaching as a profession (Leino and

Leino 1997: 89, 93). Thus, teaching and its objectives are, on the one hand, in constant change to meet the demands of society (Räsänen et al. 1999: 15). On the other hand, it is the English teachers who ultimately hold the freedom to decide what actually happens between them and parents and in English classrooms.

3.4 Home and school cooperation in local curricula

A local curriculum is a document that contains the teaching methods, learning materials, text books, goals of instruction, rules, and hierarchies in school (Viskari and Vuorikoski 2003: 63-64). In other words, it goes beyond actual teaching and includes the planning of other services as well, such as home and school cooperation (BE Act 628/1998 section 15, Luukkainen 2005: 155). To sum up, the local curriculum is a tool for teachers, including English teachers, to support them in their everyday work and to facilitate the planning of teaching and assessment.

There are no official codes of conduct for carrying out home and school cooperation in a satisfactory manner (Tuisku 2000: 44). For instance, the NCC does not oblige schools to regulate in their local curricula a required minimum amount of activities related to home and school cooperation, such as the number of messages teachers need to send to homes. English teachers among other teachers have the freedom to interpret the local curriculum and these interpretations are subject to constant change as part of the teacher's professional development to meet the changing needs of pupils (Rasku-Puttonen 2005: 95-96). Therefore teachers have a great deal of power in and through their work (Luukkainen 2005: 143) and can quite freely choose the approach they wish to use when working with parents. However, favouring approaches that accentuate cooperation with homes helps the teacher to maintain endurance and work motivation (Luukkainen 2005: 155).

According to a study by Syrjäläinen (1995: 43), teachers found drawing up and adopting local curricula a demanding and hard process. In fact, it had been realized in many schools that the local curriculum had set the objectives too high and the requirement of developing the school

by updating and revising the curriculum regularly was time-consuming and this time had often be taken from planning instruction and teaching lessons (Syrjäläinen 1995: 64). In spite of teachers' negative feelings about designing the curricula, parents had taken a more positive stance on the curricula. Syrjäläinen discovered that local curricula and their implementation increased parental interest and involvement in schools. The number of letters sent from school to home increased as schools had perceived the need to inform parents on decisions made concerning curricula, teaching and assessment practices. Schools had also welcomed a growing number of comments and feedback from homes to further develop the local curricula (Syrjäläinen 1995: 50-51). In sum, the local curriculum was found to promote home and school collaboration in terms of increased reciprocal communication.

3.5 Home and school cooperation in the schools of the present study

The local curricula of the two secondary schools in Kotka region used in data collection in the present study are now examined. The aim is to investigate whether the guidelines set in these curricula are detectable in the findings of the present study. In the following, the way the schools characterize home and school cooperation in their local curricula will be discussed. The curricula adapted in the following discussion were printed from the Internet after the data was collected. In order to protect the schools' anonymity, which was the prerequisite for conducting this study, the sources of their curricula are not included in the bibliography. In the following these two schools are referred to as school A and school B. The section that defines and describes home and school cooperation in the local curriculum is significantly shorter in school A than in school B. Otherwise they are quite similar in terms of table of contents, length and layout.

The schools differ slightly in setting objectives and principles for cooperation with parents and other significant adults. In fact, school A does not mention objectives for home and school cooperation at all. In contrast, school B lists briefly its objectives concerning cooperation with homes. More specifically, they are to enhance learning, safety and well-being. School B also aims at making communication between home and school effortless,

stating that cooperation is being founded on mutual equality between parents and teachers. Parents need also to be provided with the possibility of planning and evaluating the school's operation with teachers and pupils. Apart from school B, school A identifies a psycho-social learning environment as a place where learning and studying occurs. It is formed by a network of interpersonal relationships in school and all members of the school are part of it, namely, pupils, principal, teachers, school nurse, janitor and cleaning and catering personnel. It is of note that parents are not mentioned in this context at all.

The means of cooperation are recorded in the local curricula quite similarly. They include newsletters, meetings with teachers or form teacher (Fi. luokanvalvoja) and parents, meetings with the parents and the pupil welfare group when necessary, school events, parent-teacher conferences in each year class with changing themes related to education, surveys for parents for assessing school, parent-teacher associations and other means of cooperation. In both curricula, the role of the form teacher is emphasized in initializing contacts with homes. However, in the rest of the curricula the tasks of the form teacher and subject teachers are not separated. As a result, home and school cooperation is also the responsibility of individual subject teachers, such as English teachers.

The task of the teachers and the guidance counsellor in both schools is to guide pupils in their studies and to support their growth and development. What is more, the curricula lay a duty on teachers to inform pupils and parents on the school's code of conduct, elective courses and their meaning to a pupil's learning and future. Teachers have to aim at preventing study-related problems from arising and to arrange opportunities for parents to discuss matters related to a pupil's education. In terms of English teaching, this could mean that parents should be provided with the possibility to discuss their child's English studies. In school A it is stated that mainly the form teacher is the first to notice possible problems and is therefore responsible for contacting the home. According to both schools, the pupil has the right to attend remedial teaching initiated by the parent, pupil or subject teacher.

In school A, assessment is used to help pupils and parents form a realistic image of how the pupil has achieved the goals set for learning and development.

School B adds that one objective of assessment is also to encourage pupils in their studies. In both schools the pupil receives feedback on progress, social growth, studying skills and learning outcomes throughout secondary school.

Despite the wealth of definitions and guiding principles for organising home and school cooperation in both schools, the local curricula do not mention cooperation at all in the subject specific part of the curriculum. In English teaching, the curriculum focuses on describing course contents and objectives but does not refer to parents or cooperation between home and school at all. This does not mean that cooperation would not take place in these schools in specific school subjects. Rather, it is in accordance with the common criticism aimed at the NCC concerning the inconsistency of objectives in general and subject-specific levels (Atjonen 2005: 55) meaning that English teachers, like other subject teachers, have great independence in interpreting the way they carry out home and school cooperation for their part.

To summarise, the local curricula address home and school cooperation in accordance with the NCC without bringing any new or local features to it. Judging by the curricula, the parents of the pupils in these two schools have plenty to expect from the cooperation with teachers, such as newsletters, meetings and discussions on matters related to a pupil's education. In the following chapter, the cooperation with English teachers will be examined from the point of view of the parents.

4 ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES OF HOME AND SCHOOL COOPERATION

The aim of the following chapter is to motivate the present study from four perspectives. First, earlier studies regarding parents' role in motivating secondary school children will be looked at. An attempt is made to examine in section 4.1 whether parents could be used as supporters and facilitators of the language learning of their children if home and school worked together towards this goal. Second, the previous research findings on benefits of home and school cooperation are reviewed in section 4.2. The intention is to point out how partnering with parents could benefit the language learning of adolescents. Later in the present study the parents' perceptions of the benefits of home and school cooperation in English teaching will be investigated. Third, teachers' attitudes towards home and school cooperation in previous research and literature are dealt with in section 4.3 in order to investigate how the education professionals perceive it since the present study focuses on parents. Fourth, the challenges and obstacles of home and school cooperation are discussed in section 4.4 on general level for the reason that these will be examined later in the present study from the viewpoint of parents.

4.1 Parents and the motivation of secondary school children

The term *motivation* is used in this context to refer to a learner's willingness to learn (Hakala 2005: 39). Motivation is backed up by an individual's attitudes, beliefs and values (Vuorinen 1993: 16) and as such, the attitudes of significant adults have an influence on the motivation of children and adolescents. Motivation is valued because of its results (Ryan and Deci 2000b: 69). Consequently, it is believed that motivation and attitudes of language learners can help in explaining the differences which determine success in language learning (Bialystok and Hakuta 1994: 126). People vary in both the level of motivation and the orientation of motivation (Ryan and Deci 2000a: 54). Sometimes learners reject the opportunities to learn and are apathetic and irresponsible (Ryan and Deci 2000b: 68). Social contexts are related to differences in motivation (Ryan and Deci 2000b: 69). This means that people are more

motivated in some domains and situations than in others. In sustaining motivation, it is of importance for the learner to perceive that actions and outcomes are consistently related (Grolnick, Ryan and Deci 1991: 4).

In the following, parents' role in creating, sustaining and supporting the motivation of their secondary school children will be discussed with an attempt of complementing this with second language learning. This line of study is affected by the theory of Gardner (1985: 109, as cited in Bertram 2006) who claimed that parents can influence the language learning attitudes held by the student through two roles, namely, passive and active roles. *The passive role* includes the ways in which the often implicit attitudes held by parents toward language learning influence a child's language learning, and thus, the parents' passive role can be either negative or positive. *The active role* involves interaction between parent and child regarding language learning. For instance, parents can monitor their child's learning, encourage and show interest. However, this interaction can take negative forms as well and thus impede language learning. The theory by Gardner is significant for the present study (see e.g. Deci and Ryan 1985, Ryan and Deci 2000a, 2000b) as parental influence has not served as a starting point for other motivation theories.

In the learning process, three parties affect the learning outcome: learner, parents and teachers. The learning process needs to be examined in the light of interaction between social factors and the physical environment (Jeskanen 2001: 39). School motivation is often studied only within the school surroundings and the role of home in motivating learning has been neglected in previous research (Peltonen and Ruohotie 1992: 90). Motivation theories in education need to consider the child as a whole and not solely in school (Deci and Ryan 1985: 246). Parental involvement and attitudes toward language learning have been found to be especially important for the second language development of younger learners (Sung and Padilla 1998: 206). Teachers and parents can either support or discourage children's self-confidence in learning (Alaja 1997: 147). This has to be done in cooperation as it can be devastating to learners to notice a conflict between the values and interests of home and school (Lange 1998: 59). Therefore, home and school cooperation is a means to support and sustain motivation in secondary school pupils.

Two different orientations of motivation have been distinguished in previous research: *intrinsic* and *extrinsic motivation*. According to Ryan and Deci (2000a: 55), intrinsic motivation derives from the willingness to do something because it is innately interesting, challenging and enjoyable. Intrinsic motivation relies to a great extent on autonomy and competence perceived by the learner. This kind of orientation is hard to be fostered in education because curricula often include nonintrisically interesting subjects, teaching methods and tasks (Ryan and Deci 2000a: 60). Extrinsic motivation can be more easily affected and increased by parents and teachers. Autonomy is an essential part of extrinsic motivation as well as of intrinsic motivation: learners need to perceive independence and autonomy. Extrinsically motivated learners engage in learning activities primarily because they lead to a separable outcome and are valued by the significant others in their social context, such as parents (Ryan and Deci 2000a: 60).

What makes English teaching in secondary school troublesome is the fact that the school tries to teach skills that do not interest pupils at the time (Vuorinen 1993: 23). What is more, intrinsic motivation has been found to become weaker with each advancing grade (Ryan and Deci 2000a: 60). For instance, pupils themselves estimate to put less effort into school work in the 9th grade than they did in elementary school (Niemivirta 2000: 143). It has been suggested that home environments are related to a decline of motivation (Gottfried, Fleming and Gottfried 2001: 13). It is the challenging task of educational professionals to transfer the objectives set in the curriculum into the objectives of learners as well (Byman 2002: 34) and to motivate them to self-regulate their learning and carry out tasks and assignments independently (Ryan and Deci 2000a: 60). In practice, this cannot be done without the help and participation of parents. Extrinsic supports and structures need to be employed, for instance, in the form of parental interest (Deci and Ryan 1985: 245). There is evidence that maintaining and increasing motivation needs supportive conditions (Ryan and Deci 2000b: 70).

Home is the central source for adolescent's values and attitudes. Teachers cannot radically change learners' attitudes as they tend to change only over a long course of time (Vuorinen

1993: 22). Bertram (2006: 211) found that parental and pupil attitudes are associated. Parental attitudes, belief systems, values and behaviour patterns regarding education have been found to be good predictors of children's academic achievement (Peltonen and Ruohotie 1992: 90). In practice these can be expectations held by the parents and their support, interest and involvement in schooling (Grolnick, Ryan and Deci 1991: 3, Peltonen and Ruohotie 1992: 90). Parental influence operates in many ways. On the one hand, they are role models, passing on negative behaviours. On the other hand, they can help children understand the importance, utility and status of language (Bertram 2006: 211). What is more, it has been suggested that the level of parental language competence may be an important additional factor in determining the role they adopt in participating in the language learning of their children (Bertram 2006: 211, Gardner 1985: 109 cited by Bertram 2006). Children have been found to appreciate similar things as their parents do. It is believed that this is accomplished by the amount of learning opportunities the parents arrange for their children (Aunola 2002: 116). For instance, parents who value language learning are assumed to provide their children with more possibilities to learn languages. Children then copy the attitudes of their parents and become more motivated, whereas lacking or negative parental interest will decrease their enthusiasm to learn languages (Alaja 1997: 89).

By working together home and school can implement practices that support intrinsic motivation (Gottfried, Fleming and Gottfried 2001: 14). Intrinsic motivation is supported by an emotional atmosphere at home that inspires the child into learning (Yli-Luoma 2003: 45). Grolnick, Ryan and Deci (1991) found that parental involvement and interest in a child's education and supporting his or her autonomy lead to improved learning outcomes. High parental involvement has been found to be associated with competence and motivation (Pulkkinen 1982, cited by Grolnick, Ryan and Deci 1991). Important qualities of home that contribute to better school achievement include also a stimulating learning environment, parental expectations for achievement and encouragement of curiosity and challenge, help in doing homework and active home and school cooperation (Gottfried 1990: 535, Peltonen and Ruohotie 1992: 90).

As mentioned previously (see 3.1.1), providing homes with multifaceted information and also positive feedback concerning a pupil's language learning is part of home and school cooperation. Peltonen and Ruohotie (1992: 21) have adopted suggestions made by Brobhy (1981) and formed a concept of effective feedback and praise that helps in supporting learning and motivation. They conclude that supportive positive feedback needs to be detailed and based on facts and actual pupil performance. Coming from a parent the praise is more meaningful than from a teacher (Paananen 1985: 148). Therefore the positive feedback and praise forwarded by the teacher but mediated by the parent increases the pupil's appreciation of what has been learned in an English class and motivation in language learning will become stronger.

4.2 Benefits of cooperation

The aim of home and school cooperation is to support the pupil's growth and good learning (NCC 2004: 20). First, the ways in which adolescents benefit from home and school cooperation will be discussed next from the points of view of behaviour, concentration and academic performance. With these benefits in mind, home and school cooperation can be motivated. Second, the benefits of home and school cooperation in improving teachers' job satisfaction will be discussed in brief.

Secondary school pupils' behaviour and concentration can be improved through home and school cooperation. According to Beveridge (2005: 61), pupils did better personally and socially when parents and teachers cooperated. Aho (1980) found that after increased home and school cooperation in secondary school there was less verbal disturbance and motoric restlessness in the classroom. What is more, there was a decrease in negligence in the pupils' schoolwork. In Aho's study, home and school cooperation was increased by sending more information to homes and thus, parents' attitudes toward greater school involvement were more positive and they perceived it as useful and effortless. Parents and teachers can agree on applying similar rules consistently both at home and in school. When rule violations in school are communicated to parents they can dispense sanctions or decline privileges that are out of

teachers' access (Miller 2003: 58). Also bullying in school can be reduced or even prevented through home and school cooperation (Salmivalli 2003: 24-25). Pupils themselves have been found to perceive that parents, not teachers, are the party to most likely bring about improvement in their behaviour. Therefore parents are potent associates when seeking ways to reach good pupil demeanour (Miller 2003: 153).

Pupils' academic achievement can be fostered when parents and teachers work together. Stevenson and Baker (1987, also Eloranta 2000: 69) discovered that parental involvement in secondary school was related to pupils' school performance. Deslandes and Bertrand (2005) specified the effects of home and school cooperation and found that pupils whose parents were involved tended to earn higher grades, had higher ambitions and less disciplinary problems. Wei and Zhou (2003) found that parents' committed participation, such as helping with homework and supporting what was done in classroom, was essential for children's ESL success, but this study has not been extended to secondary school pupils. Parents can support their children's schooling primarily by showing interest and encouraging them (Kasama and Tett 2001: 228). Thus, their school enjoyment can be enhanced (Kauppinen and Koivu 2000). This is an important factor when educating adolescents (see chapter 2.1).

Although it is primarily the pupil who benefits from cooperation, it can also increase teachers' work satisfaction. Soininen (1986) found that teachers were pleased with the results of increased cooperation with homes. They felt more positive about their work as they experienced support from parents in dealing with pupils' problems (also Hudley and Barnes 1993: 4). If schools cooperate with homes, parents' possible prejudice and scepticism toward modern and experimental teaching methods can be decreased and their understanding and support can be achieved (Hakkarainen et al. 2005: 184-185). Therefore teachers can use a wide range of teaching techniques without fearing criticism from parents. They can also receive useful feedback when developing their teaching (Syrjäläinen 1995: 51). Parents in general feel positive about providing curriculum enrichment activities in home (Hudley and Barnes 1993: 12). Furthermore, teachers can save classroom time when they can rely on the assistance of parents in certain kinds of home assignments (Wei and Zhou 2003).

4.3 Teachers' attitudes towards cooperation

Teachers' attitudes towards cooperation with parents are discussed next. One of the aims of the present study is to investigate whether parents perceive cooperating with the English teacher as problematic. Previous research conducted on teachers' attitudes is important for the present study as they help in understanding the possible obstacles parents experience when building partnerships between home and school. Teachers' attitudes towards home and school cooperation have not been studied in one school subject or in English teaching. Therefore the following discussion is general in nature and based on research conducted in secondary schools. In the following, some of the teachers' attitudes to home and school cooperation in secondary school will be discussed. First, cooperation as a constraint to a teacher's work will be examined. Second, the limitations set by teacher training and salaries will be reviewed. Third, home and school cooperation from the point of view of teachers will be discussed in the light of teaching as a tradition.

Teachers and principals in both elementary and secondary school have been found to value home and school cooperation but some of them consider it rather a negative trend. For instance, they criticized that parents brought constraints and pressure to teachers' work (Deci and Ryan 1985: 268). What is more, teachers' workload seemed to grow as they were required to be in charge of informing parents constantly (Syrjäläinen 1995: 14, 50). Teachers evaluated assessment and reporting to parents to be the most demanding and anxiety-provoking parts of their work (Hargreaves et al. 2001: 187). Teachers estimated that the main reason for not doing cooperation included subject-teacher system, too large classes and schools (Korpinen, Korpinen and Husso 1980a: ii). In addition, teachers have been found to be concerned about their expanding job description that seems to include more duties than mere teaching (Välijärvi 2005: 112). For that reason they would rather leave home and school cooperation to be the responsibility of curators and other social services staff (Rantanen and Hilasvuori 2002).

Teachers can also take a negative stance toward home and school cooperation as they feel that they receive both inadequate training and compensation (Korpinen, Korpinen and Husso

1980a: ii, Paananen 1985: 106, Rantanen and Hilasvuori 2002). Teachers do not get paid for home and school cooperation as it is considered to be part of their job (Rantanen and Hilasvuori 2002). Thus, teachers can feel that cooperation has to be done outside paid school hours and that parents do not respect teachers' spare time as they tend to contact the teachers in the evenings (Paananen 1985: 106). According to Korpinen, Korpinen and Husso (1980a: ii), only 10 % of teachers perceived to possess the necessary teacher training for cooperating with parents. Teacher education emphasizes proficiency needed in the classroom at the expense of teaching cooperative skills (Ekebom et al. 2000: 24, Viskari 2003: 172), even though cooperative abilities are seen as part of a teacher's professional competence (Luukkainen 2005: 163). In practice, the need for cooperation is not revealed until teachers enter work life (Niemi 1999: 81) and therefore skills needed in collaborating with parents have to be acquired through a teacher's self-study during their work life (Soininen 1986: 95). However, younger teachers have been found to emphasize home and school cooperation more than older teachers (Kari 1996: 19).

Teaching as a tradition has always emphasized the importance of self-reliance and independence (Alasuutari 2003: 90, Niemi 1998: 63). Teachers may feel embarrassed to reach out and ask for assistance from parents when a pupil is encountering difficulties at school (Paananen 1985: 153, Vuorinen 2000: 21). It is of note that there are differences between teachers as it has been discovered that some promote cooperation with parents whereas the practice of other teachers tended to create barriers between home and school (McCarthey 1999: 84). When teachers feel insecure about themselves and their duties in their occupation they tend to take distance from colleagues and parents (Talib 2002: 56, Rasku-Puttonen 2005: 95). This was evident in the essays written by teacher trainees: only a few of them mentioned pupils' parents as part of their imaginary school day, and these remarks were solely negative in tone (Viskari and Vuorikoski 2003: 74). Teachers can also be afraid of potential criticism aimed at their work competence (Ekebom et al. 2000: 24) Parents' expectations and demands can create stress and threaten teachers' well-being and work satisfaction (Välijärvi 2005: 106).

4.4 Challenges and obstacles

Barriers complicating the relationship and communication between parents and teachers in secondary school are discussed next. This discussion takes primarily the viewpoint of parents as teachers' attitudes towards home and school cooperation were examined previously in section 4.4 and because the present study deals with parents' perceptions and experiences. The obstacles of home and school cooperation have been studied in Finland in detail by Korpinen, Korpinen and Husso (1980b) and Soininen (1986), and these studies relate best to the present study since previous research has not examined challenges and obstacles in home and school cooperation in English language learning. Korpinen, Korpinen and Husso (1980b) separated between two different types of obstacles: physical-organisational obstacles, such as long distance between home and school or large classes, and psycho-social obstacles that occur during interaction between teachers and parents, such as uncertainty or negative atmosphere. Soininen (1986) has examined and divided these challenges and obstacles further into five categories: practical obstacles, attitudinal obstacles, lack of motivation to cooperation, insufficient information flow and societal obstacles. The following discussion will be based on this categorization.

Practical obstacles (Soininen 1986) are closely related to physical-organisational obstacles introduced by Korpinen, Korpinen and Husso (1980b). The most common practical obstacles the parents encounter include lack of time, problems in transportation or shift work that excludes them from school events such as parent-teacher conferences (Aho 1980: 36, Bridges 1987 as quoted by Miller 2003: 139). What is more, large class-sizes and schools make parents feel that teachers do not have time or ability to cooperate with them (Korpinen, Korpinen and Husso 1980b: i). According to both parents and teachers, the subject-teacher system was the main obstacle in home and school cooperation in secondary schools (Korpinen, Korpinen and Husso 1980b: i). Uncertainty in both parents and teachers became increasingly a more significant obstacle in cooperation as pupils entered secondary school (Korpinen, Korpinen and Husso 1980b: 53).

Attitudinal obstacles are barriers created by prejudice or negative experiences in the past (Soininen 1986: 53, Eloranta 2000: 67). Parents' past experiences have an impact on the way they perceive their children's school: if they have negative or depressing experiences, they are not likely to contact the teacher or enjoy visiting their children's school (Berger 1981: 92). Furthermore, Hudley and Barnes (1993: 12) found that only a few parents felt that school respected them, their values, opinions and input. Therefore, some parents may be apprehensive and hesitant to make suggestions or recommendations as they fear it might harm the pupil or offend teachers (Ekebom et al. 2000: 24). When seeking help for their child, parents can be intimidated by the power difference between them and the teacher because in this type of interaction only the parents expose themselves and their family's intimate circumstances (Jones 1993: 155-156, Jokinen and Suoninen 2000: 67).

Lack of motivation means that some parents do not perceive the need for cooperation. Their child is either doing well in school or having overwhelming difficulties (Soininen 1986: 53), although evidence shows that some parents would be interested in cooperation also when the child is not encountering difficulties at school (Kauppinen and Koivu 2000). Parents have been found to appreciate cooperation more in elementary school than in secondary school (Korpinen, Korpinen and Husso 1980a: iv, Kinnunen 2005: 27). On the one hand, parents are interested in matters related to their children's school and education. On the other hand, not all are necessarily interested in home and school cooperation. Research indicates that up to 10-30 % of parents are not willing to participate e.g. in school events (Aho 1980: 32). Poorly organised school events, that is, events that are uninteresting or take place at inconvenient time contribute to lack of motivation (Aho 1980: 36). Motivation can also be low if parents perceive inability to help their children or if home and school cooperation is not desired by the adolescents themselves (Deslandes and Bertrand 2005: 165, 170).

Insufficient information flow forms also an obstacle to home and school cooperation. Parents have been found to be dissatisfied with the amount of information they receive from school when traditional forms of cooperation were used, that is, when schools favoured primarily formal school events at the expense of providing frequent and individual pupil information (Korpinen, Korpinen and Husso 1980a: 6, Korpinen, Korpinen and Husso 1980b: 54-55,

Soininen 1986: 4, Hudley and Barnes 1993: 11-12, Barton 1998: 202). Communicating with education professionals can be tiresome to parents as they have been found to switch codes from the informal home language to the more formal school language when interacting with teachers (Alasuutari 2003: 90). This can also hinder information flow.

According to Soininen (1986: 56), *societal obstacles* are things like frequent relocating. Thus, children can often change schools. Teachers may also change over a short period of time (Eloranta 2000: 67-68). This makes home and school cooperation difficult as there is no time for education professionals and parents to bond and create an open and trusting relationship.

5 AIMS, DATA AND METHODS

In the following the methodological choices of the present study will be discussed. Firstly, the previous research is examined with the purpose of indicating a niche in this field of study and thus, motivating the present study. Secondly, research questions that serve as a foundation for the study will be introduced. Thirdly, the data collection procedure will be introduced. In addition, the participants and their demographical information will be given including the obtainable information concerning the pupils in question. Moreover, the methods of analysis used in the present study will be outlined.

5.1 Motivating the study

Home and school cooperation has been studied mostly in the field of educational research. The majority of these studies have been conducted in elementary school. The present study aims at investigating cooperation by including three distinct features: home and school cooperation a) in secondary school b) in English teaching c) from the point of view of the parents. Next, the previous research in home and school cooperation will be summarised in brief to point out the trends and to motivate the present study.

Good examples of investigating home and school cooperation in elementary school are presented in Kaltiainen (2006), Seppälä (2002) and Välisaari (2002). It is of note that these studies have focused on the perceptions of teachers and pupils and paid only little attention to parents. Kaltiainen (2006) examined parent-teacher discussions in elementary school by interviewing both parents and teachers. Seppälä (2002) examined home and school cooperation from the point of view of 1st grade elementary school children by conducting interviews. Discussions between teachers and parents from the point of view of teachers have been studied by Välisaari 2002. Also her study was conducted in elementary school. Räty, Snellman, Leinonen, Maksimainen (2000) examined how parents of elementary school pupils relate to the evaluation of their child.

There are some studies of home and school cooperation in secondary school, but they do not separate between cooperation in different school subjects. In particular, there are no studies of home and school cooperation in language teaching in Finland. Instead, the previous research in secondary school focuses on examining parents' and teachers' perceptions and opinions of home and school cooperation. Korpinen, Korpinen and Husso (1980a, 1980b) investigated in a series of studies home and school cooperation in secondary school from the point of view of both parents and teachers. In addition to perceptions and opinions held by parents and teachers, they also examined the challenges and obstacles in cooperation. Challenges and obstacles were then further examined by Soininen (1986). Lähde (2002) studied parents' perceptions of enhancing home and school cooperation in the transmission phase from preschool to elementary school. Kauppinen and Koivu (2000) examined whether home and school cooperation in secondary school was extended to include equally all families.

There is no previous research in home and school cooperation in language teaching in Finland. In other countries, parents' role in English language learning has not been studied much either. Wei and Zhou's case-study (2003) examined the ways in which parents can help their child in learning English at home. Bartram (2006) studied perceptions of parental influence on attitudes to language learning and found some evidence for an association between parental and pupil attitudes. Sung and Padilla 1998 investigated student motivation, parental attitudes, and involvement in the learning of Asian languages in elementary and secondary schools.

5.2 Research questions

The main goal of the present study is to investigate the current situation in home and school cooperation in English teaching in the secondary school from the point of view of the parents of 9th grade pupils. The research questions have been divided into two main sections which include several sub-questions.

1) What kind of perceptions do the parents have of home and school cooperation in English teaching?

2) What kinds of experiences do the parents have of home and school cooperation in English teaching?

The sub-questions to the two main questions are presented in section 5.3 below. Firstly, the perceptions held by parents of home and school cooperation form the first half of the research questions. This was due to, on the one hand, the interest toward attitudinal obstacles in home and school cooperation discovered in parents by Soininen (1986) and Eloranta (2000). These attitudinal obstacles can complicate the relationship and communication between home and school. On the other hand, on the European level it has been reported that parents wish to improve the child's performance, feel the desire to know more about the school and may want to influence the curriculum (OECD 1997:27-28). Therefore the present study aims at finding results which indicate whether parents find cooperation important, easy and supportive to pupil's growth and English language learning. Secondly, the actual experiences parents have had of home and school cooperation were included in the present study. As discussed in chapter 3, home and school cooperation is a necessity laid out in the Finnish Law and in NCC. Therefore it was of interest whether these ordainments were followed in these two schools in English teaching, and what forms had the cooperation taken as the local curricula did not regulate cooperation in different school subjects.

Since the aim of the present study is to describe the current situation in home and school cooperation in English teaching in two secondary schools instead of finding explanations or comparisons to previous studies, there will be no hypotheses to compliment the research questions (Hirsjärvi, Remes and Sajavaara 2001: 148).

5.3 Questionnaire

The objective of the study is to chart and describe the current situation of home and school cooperation in English teaching in the secondary school as perceived by the parents of 9th grade pupils. The reasons for using a questionnaire for data collection, problems with using a questionnaire and description of the questionnaire compilation process are discussed in the following.

Using questionnaires of various kinds is one of the most common methods of data collection in linguistic research (Dörnyei 2003: 1). It is the most efficient and economical way of covering a relatively large population in comparison with more time-consuming interviews. It is easy to construct and also offers the possibility to ask various questions and to estimate both time and costs of the research (Hirsjärvi, Remes and Sajavaara 2001: 182). Moreover, questionnaires are easy to construct and the information is gathered in a form that is readily processable (Dörnyei 2003: 3).

The possibility of a low response rate has to be taken into consideration when using a questionnaire. According to Dörnyei (2003: 74-76), the minimum of respondents required for a study depends on the statistical procedures applied to data analysis. At least 50 participants are needed to show meaningful correlations and ensuring that the coefficients are significant. For factor analysis the preferable number of participants is 100 or more. Impersonal questionnaires typically attract a response rate of only around 30 %, and over 50 % can be seen as a good response rate (Gillham, as quoted by Dörnyei 2003: 76).

Since all other data collection instruments, such as interviews, were abandoned as unsuitable for the purposes of the present study, the next task was to concentrate on planning and constructing the questionnaire. In an early phase a decision was made that the questionnaire was to be filled-in anonymously. The confidentiality was emphasized in the cover letter in order to encourage the parents to answer as honestly as possible. This enabled the inclusion of more sensitive items, such as the possibility of reporting about disagreements with the English teacher without the parent fearing of being identified or affecting the pupil's English

grade (see appendix 1, 7.8 and 7.9). Because of the niche in previous research in this field (see section 5.1), other studies could not be consulted in shaping the statements and questions. Therefore forming the research questions into simple and comprehensible statements and questions was the first phase of constructing the questionnaire. A proseminar paper with the same topic previous to the present study was used as a pilot study. The pilot study had a significant role in rephrasing unambiguous questions to avoid misinterpretations, because misunderstandings had affected the outcomes of the proseminar paper. Based on the experiences gained from the pilot phase, the questionnaire was then reformulated by limiting the number of items and carefully considering the lay-out and the order of the items to make the questionnaire as comprehensible as possible.

The questionnaire was based on the research questions (see section 5.2). It consisted of four pages as suggested by Dörnyei (2003: 18) and was divided into three parts. The first part contained seven questions concerning the background of the respondent. These also functioned as variables. Sensitive topics such as marital status were excluded as they were not absolutely necessary for the project (Dörnyei 2003: 22). The parents were asked to indicate their sex, age, education, employment, English language learning history, English language proficiency and the frequency of using English. The second part asked the parents to answer five background questions about the child in the 9th grade concerning his or her sex, rank among siblings, English grade in the latest report card, number of English teachers in the secondary school and upper secondary schooling plans. The third part contained eight sections with the actual research questions. Out of these eight questions, one was an open-ended question (see appendix 1, section 8). It was used to gather information on the ideal state of home and school cooperation as perceived by the parents and the answers were analyzed quantitatively. The answers for the open-ended question were first grouped qualitatively by using content analysis by Weber (1990) and then analyzed quantitatively. The additional comments (see appendix 1, section 9) were not analyzed or included in the present study.

Six of the questions were statements that were meant to be answered by using scales of different widths. They measured either opinions and evaluations such as *'strongly agree'* to *'strongly disagree'* or potency such as *'important'* to *'not at all important'* (see appendix 1,

sections 2, 4, 5 and 7) or the frequency of actions such as *'constantly'* to *'never'* (see appendix 1, sections 1 and 6). Three of these six statements had also the choice of writing an additional answer if none of the existing alternatives was applicable (see appendix 1, 4.7, 5.9 and 6.7). These were not analyzed in the data processing phase as the respondents had not reacted to them and thus, did not reveal any relevant information. Section three, in which the parents were asked to indicate the party taking initiative in the home and school cooperation, was a multiple-choice question including five alternative answers (see appendix 1, section 3).

5.4 Subjects

The questionnaires were passed on to the parents of the 9th grade pupils in two secondary schools in the town of Kotka. Therefore, the number of pupils present at school on that day determined the number of questionnaires handed out. The frequencies of pupils, questionnaires handed out and handed in can be found in table 1.

Table 1. Delivered and returned questionnaires by frequency

	pupils	handed_out	handed_in	empty	total
School A	114	114	79	2	**77**
School B	123	109	73	1	**72**
Total	237	223	152	3	**149**

In school A, all of the 9th grade pupils were present on that day and 114 questionnaires were handed out whereas in school B, 14 pupils were missing and their parents were thus excluded from the study. The response rate was slightly higher in school A with 79 questionnaires handed in but two of these turned out to be empty. Therefore 77 filled questionnaires were obtained from school A resulting in a response rate of 67,5 %. In school B, 73 questionnaires were collected but one of them was not filled. Hence there were 72 responses from school B and the response rate was 66 %. These can be seen as good response rates since according to

Gillham (cited in Dörnyei 2003: 76) most impersonal questionnaires attract only a response rate of around 30 %. A total of 149 questionnaires were thus obtained for further analysis.

5.4.1 Respondent demographics

The first part of the questionnaire contained seven background questions concerning the respondent. These function also as the variables: sex, age, education, employment, years of English studies, English skills and the frequency of English use (see appendix 1, part 1). All of the background questions in the first part were multiple choice questions. In the following, the basic statistics of these variables are summarized to provide an overview of the respondents and pupils in question. A more detailed description of these demographical data can be found in appendix 2 in the form of tables.

The vast majority of the respondents were female: 80,5 % were mothers and mere 19,5 % were fathers. Of the respondents 22,3 % were 30-40 years of age whereas 62,8 % were 41-50 years old. The remaining 14,9 % were 51-60-year-olds. To indicate their educational background, the parents could choose from five alternatives: 'basic education', 'upper secondary school', 'vocational school', 'polytechnic' or 'university'. The majority of the respondents had vocational schooling (55%). All the remaining alternatives had a somewhat even amount of responses: 10, 7 % had upper secondary education, 10, 7 % a polytechnic degree and 10, 7 % had a university degree. Basic education was the educational background of 12,8 % of the respondents. The majority of the parents were employed or self-employed (84,6 %).

The parents were asked to indicate the extent of their English studies, their English skills and the frequency of their English usage. Almost all of the respondents had studied English. The mode answer to this question was '7-10 years' which was chosen by 46 respondents (31,1 %). Thirty-eight respondents (25,7 %) had studied English for more than ten years. Despite their lengthy English studies, only four of the respondents (2,7 %) evaluated their English skills to be 'excellent'. Twenty-four subjects (16,2 %) considered their English to be 'good', and 77

(52 %) evaluated their skills to be 'fair'. Four subjects (2,7 %) claimed to have no English skills. Almost all of the parents used English at least 'every now and then', since only 9,5 % of the 147 respondents who answered this item claimed never to use English. Most respondents, i.e. 28,6 % used English '1-2 times a year'.

5.4.2 Pupil demographics

In addition to the respondent background questions, the subjects were asked to answer five questions concerning the pupil in the second part of the questionnaire. The parents were to answer questions regarding their child's sex, rank among siblings (first-born, middle-born, last-born), English grade in the latest report card, number of English teachers in the secondary school and the child's plans for upper secondary education ('general upper secondary school', 'vocational upper secondary education and training' or 'other'). The subjects were asked to write down the number of English teachers and the pupil's English grade, whereas the other three questions were multiple-choice questions. Next, the percentages of these background variables will be summarised briefly.

Evidently the parents of the 9th grade girls had been more willing to fill-in the questionnaire since 59,1 % of the respondents' children in question were girls. The majority of the pupils were first-born (48, 3 %). Parents of last-born were the second biggest group among the subjects (20, 8 %). Parents were asked to indicate their child's English grade in the latest report card. All the English grades on the scale from 4 to 10 were appeared in the sample. Most of the respondents' children had an English grade 8. Only two pupils had an English grade 4. There were 9 pupils who had 10 in English. To sum up, the distribution of English grades in the present sample is wide-ranging.

The parents were asked to report the number of English teachers during secondary school. Two of the parents had given exceptional answers to this item stating that their children had had 6 or 8 English teachers during secondary school. It is possible that they had counted all

the substitute teachers as well whereas others did not. All remaining subjects had used counts 1, 2 or 3 English teachers. One English teacher was the most popular answer (83 %).

The last item of the second part of the questionnaire dealt with pupils' upper secondary schooling plans. Subjects could choose from three alternative answers: 'vocational upper secondary school', 'general upper secondary school' and 'other'. The majority of the pupils, 58,4 %, were going to continue their studies in general upper secondary school after 9th grade. Vocational upper secondary school was the choice of 36,8 % of the pupils whereas the remaining 14,8 % had other plans.

5.5 Data collection and data processing

The technique that was used to collect the data was a combination of convenience and opportunity sampling (Dörnyei 2003: 72). Two schools were chosen by both geographical proximity and easy accessibility. They were also available immediately, which helped to collect the data in a short period of time. Five secondary schools principals in the Kotka region were contacted, but one declined and two of them were not ready to cooperate at such a short notice. In addition, the two schools chosen were willing to participate in the study and to help with the data collection. I was given the opportunity to present myself and the purpose of my study to the 9th grade pupils as I handed out the questionnaires in sealed envelopes and asked the pupils to take them home to their parents.

The pupils who returned the questionnaires in two days' time were rewarded with candy, which may have contributed to the high response rate. The chance of meeting the pupils in person proved to be vital for the study since I was able to establish a connection with the classes and to motivate them to help me in the data collection process. It caused a disturbance to the lessons and this kind of data collection could not have been carried out without the approval and help of the principals and teachers. This was a very economical way of delivering the questionnaires to the respondents as there were no postage fees. It was also a convenient for the respondents to return the questionnaires as they did not have to mail them.

The questionnaires were delivered and returned in both schools at the same time in late April of 2007. The timing was suitable since the last seven-week teaching period was about to start in both schools. On the one hand, the idea was to ensure that the parents would have almost three years of experience in home and school cooperation in English teaching in the secondary school, and delivering the questionnaire in late April was only one month short from meeting this criterion. On the other hand, it is possible that the parents were more motivated to fill in the questionnaire at that point as the pupils still had one more month of basic education left and the topic of home and school cooperation in the secondary school still felt somewhat personal and interesting to the respondents.

The questionnaires were analyzed quantitatively and they were treated anonymously since it was the prerequisite for conducting this study. A statistical computer program (SPSS 14.0 for Windows) was used for the quantitative analysis in computing the results in numeric form. The data were analyzed with the help of frequency, percentage and valid percentage tables, crosstabulations and graphs. The relationships between background variables and the actual items were investigated with crosstabulations. Chi-square tests were used to examine the statistical significance of the crosstabulations. In addition, the respondents' descriptions of the ideal situation of home and school cooperation in the English teaching (see appendix 1, section 8) were first grouped thematically and then analyzed quantitatively.

Background variables from the first two parts of the questionnaire were crosstabulated with the items 1-7. It is important to notice when interpreting the results of crosstabulations that they do not show cause-effect relations between the variables. Since all the twelve background variables (parent's sex, age, education, employment, years of English studies, English skills and the frequency of English use, child's sex, rank among siblings, English grade in the latest report card, number of English teachers in the secondary school and plans for upper secondary education) were crosstabulated separately with each answer, there were almost 20 pages of printed results. Thus, statistically insignificant results and items are left out.

Hence forward in the tables of crosstabulations, background variables related to the parent will be typed in bold. The statistical significance (p) of these results is hence forward indicated by the following symbols:

p<.001	highly significant	***
p<.01	significant	**
p<.05	almost significant	*

The P-values present the level of significance of the relations between background variables and the items. These values are used to evaluate the likelihood of similar phenomena occurring in the population as a whole and not only in the present sample. In other words, these values express the possibility of similar trends in all parents of 9th grade pupils and not only in the parents of the present study.

6 RESULTS

The main objective of the present study was to describe the home and school cooperation in English teaching in secondary school from the point of view of parents. Their perceptions and experiences were investigated to get an overall impression of the current situation. The data were collected with questionnaires in two middle-sized secondary schools in the Kotka region with the assistance of 9th grade pupils. In this chapter, the results concerning the parents' perceptions are reported first and their experiences second. The quantitative results are reported in terms of frequencies, percentages and/or valid percentages of the cases compiled into tables and figures. In sections 6.1 and 6.2, the descriptive statistics of the tested items are given first, followed by the possible statistical significance in terms of p-values. The thematic order of the results is given in figure 1 below. The number of the items in the questionnaire is given in parentheses (see appendix 2).
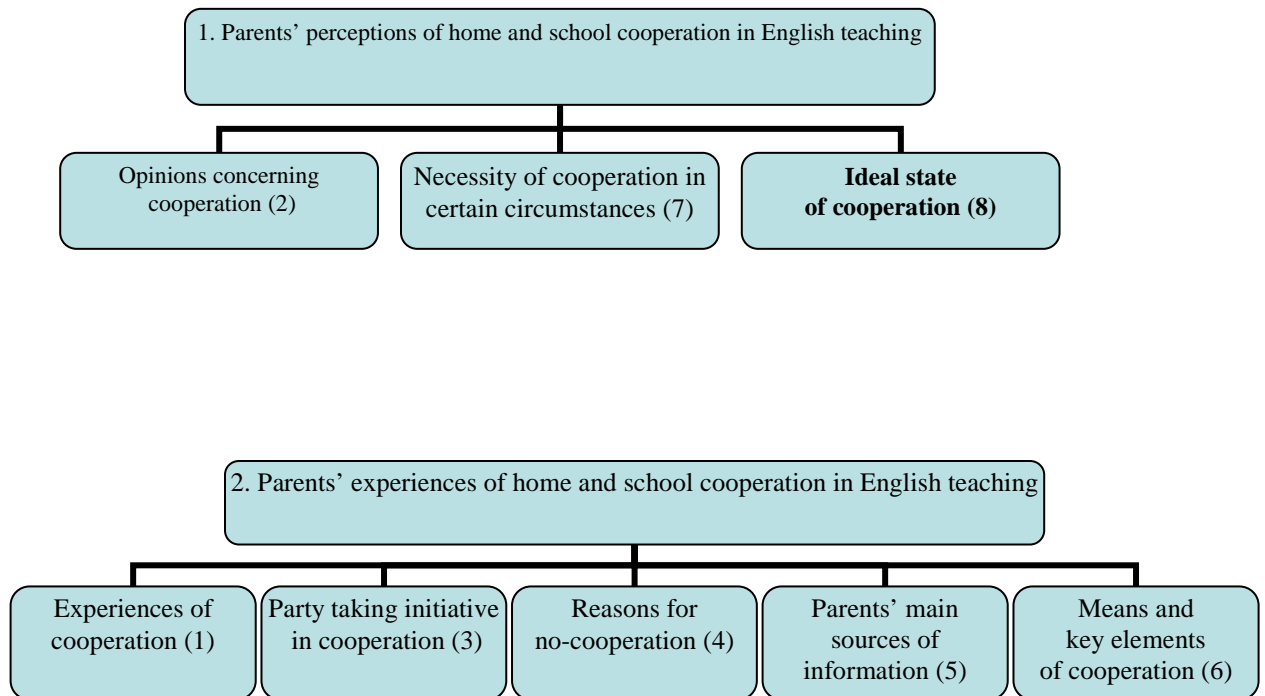
Figure 1. Thematic order of the results

6.1 Parents' perceptions of home and school cooperation

The parents' perceptions of home and school cooperation were tested by three items in the questionnaire (see appendix 1, items 2, 7 and 8). Items 2 and 7 were statements that were answered using a Likert-scale with four alternatives. The ideal state of cooperation was the only open-ended question in the questionnaire, and is typed in bold in figures. The findings for this open-ended question were also treated quantitatively in the data processing phase. However, it was first grouped qualitatively to form the categories for further quantitative processing.

Opinions concerning cooperation

The parents' opinions concerning cooperation were measured with six statements, all of which were answered by using a Likert-scale with four alternatives (1 'fully agree', 2 'agree', 3 'disagree' and 4 'fully disagree'). The results for this item are summarised in table 2.

Table 2. Opinions concerning cooperation

Home and school cooperation in English teaching	n	1 Fully agree	2 Agree	3 Disagree	4 Fully disagree	x	s
2.1 improves a pupil's academic achievement in the English language	143	23,1	60,1	15, 4	1,4	1,95	0,66
2.2 supports a pupil's growth and development	143	24,5	60,8	14,0	0,7	1,90	0,64
2.3 supports the development of a pupil's language skills in the English language	142	26,8	57,0	14,8	1,4	1,90	0,68
2.4 supports in parenting	146	10,3	52,7	33,6	3,4	2,30	0,70
2.5 is important	142	22,5	61,3	15,5	0,7	1,94	0,64
2.6 is easy and uncomplicated	142	7,7	40,1	41,5	10,6	2,54	0,78

Descriptive statistics

The majority of the respondents agreed or fully agreed that home and school cooperation improved a pupil's academic achievement in the English language. Quite a number also fully agreed or agreed that home and school cooperation supported a pupil's growth and development. Moreover, the majority fully agreed and agreed that it supported the development of a pupil's language skills in the English language. In their stances toward the supportive nature of home and school cooperation in parenting, the parents were more divided. Over half of the respondents agreed that home and school cooperation in English teaching did support them in parenting. However, a third of the respondents disagreed. The last two statements measured the perceived importance and ease of home and school cooperation in English teaching. On the one hand, the majority of the subjects fully agreed or agreed that home and school cooperation was important in English teaching. On the other hand, the perceptions of cooperation being easy or uncomplicated were more evenly divided between agreement and disagreement.

It appears that the parents' perceptions of the importance of home and school cooperation in English teaching were to a great extent positive. However, not all of them were of the opinion that home and school cooperation was easy or uncomplicated.

Statistically significant correlations

The background variables from the first two parts of the questionnaire were crosstabulated with the six items of section 2. The background variables were the parents' sex, age, education and employment, English language learning history, English language proficiency and the frequency of using English. The background variables regarding the pupil were his or her sex, rank among siblings, English grade in the latest report card, number of English teachers in the secondary school and upper secondary schooling plans. In table 3 and the others to follow, the background variables related to the parent are typed in bold. It is important to note that when interpreting the results of crosstabulations, they do not show cause and effect relations between the variables. The statistically significant results can be found in table 3. Statistically insignificant results and items were left out.

Table 3. Statistical significance of the background variables in relation to items 2.1-2.6

Home and school cooperation in English teaching	Significance p Number n	**English studies**	Rank among siblings	English grade	Pupil's sex
2.1 improves a pupil's academic achievement in the English language	p n			*,031 142	
2.2 supports a pupil's growth and development	p n				*,039 143
2.5 is important	p n	*,046 141	*,036 142		

The few relationships that could be found in the data were only almost significant as all the p-values were over .01. Thus, one should exercise great caution when drawing generalisations from these findings. It is slightly probable that the correlation between the years of parents' English studies and a pupil's rank among siblings would have an influence on the perceived importance of home and school cooperation in English teaching and that this would be true in the whole population, that is, in all parents of 9th grade pupils. Moreover, one could think that a pupil's English grade and a parent's perception of home and school cooperation as a factor in improving a pupil's academic achievement in the English language are to some extent related and that this is true in the population. A similar statistical relation between a pupil's sex and the parent's stance toward home and school cooperation in supporting a pupil's growth and development might be found also in the population.

Necessity of cooperation in certain situations

The necessity of cooperation was measured with eleven statements that described different situations in English teaching, such as conflicts and difficulties. A Likert-scale with four alternatives (1 'very necessary', 2 'quite necessary', 3 'only a little necessary' and 3 'not at all necessary') was used to react to these statements. Table 4 summarises the findings for this item.

Table 4. Necessity of cooperation

Necessity of cooperation when	N	1 Very necessary	2 Quite necessary	3 Only a little necessary	4 Not at all necessary	x	s
7.1 English grade is falling	74	33,8	47,3	17,6	1,4	1,86	0,75
7.2 Risk of failing the English course	59	84,7	10,2	1,7	3,4	1,24	0,65
7.3 Difficulties in English language learning	70	58,6	28,6	11,4	1,4	1,56	0,75
7.4 Neglecting homework in English	60	63,3	26,7	6,7	3,3	1,50	0,77
7.5 Problems in private life disturbing a pupil's school work	60	41,7	36,7	18,3	3,3	1,83	0,85
7.6 Behavioural problems in English classes	58	58,6	25,9	12,1	3,4	1,60	0,84
7.7 Punishments received in English classes	58	51,7	32,8	10,3	5,2	1,69	0,86
7.8 Conflicts between the pupil and the English teacher	59	55,9	33,9	3,4	6,8	1,61	0,85
7.9 Conflicts between the parent and the English teacher	53	47,2	34,0	9,4	9,4	1,81	0,96
7.10 Increasing pupil's motivation in learning English	66	37,9	45,5	10,6	6,1	1,85	0,85
7.11 Bullying	56	76,8	16,1	5,4	1,8	1,32	0,66

Descriptive statistics

If a pupil's English grade was falling (statement 7.1), the respondents saw home and school cooperation as quite important. The risk of failing the English course (statement 7.2) was seen as the most necessary situation for cooperation with the majority of the respondents agreeing that cooperation was then very necessary or quite necessary. Difficulties in English language learning (statement 7.3) were also an important source of cooperation. Neglecting homework in English (statement 7.4) made cooperation very necessary or quite necessary according to the respondents, as did problems in private life disturbing a pupil's school work (statement 7.5). Moreover, it was very or quite necessary to cooperate if there were behavioural

problems in the English classes (statement 7.6). Home and school cooperation was seen as predominantly very necessary under the circumstances of a pupil receiving punishments in the English classes (statement 7.7). Conflicts between the pupil and the English teacher were seen as for the most part very necessary situations for cooperation by the parents (statement 7.8). Conflicts between the parent and the English teacher (statement 7.9) made cooperating very necessary according to the majority of the respondents. Moreover, increasing a pupil's motivation in learning English (statement 7.10) was quite a necessary time for cooperation. Bullying (statement 7.11) was primarily a very necessary situation for home and school cooperation in English teaching.

The majority of the respondents found home and school cooperation very necessary or quite necessary in all of the eleven situations mentioned in the list. It appears that the parents considered the risk of failing the English course or bullying the two most crucial sources for the necessity of cooperation in English teaching. Furthermore, the results indicate that the parents see cooperation as necessary mostly when the pupil is having difficulties in language learning, is facing problems in his or her personal life or is not behaving properly in English classes. It appears that the parents thus wish their child to pass a course more than they wish to help him or her to increase motivation in learning English or to improve the English grade. These are in contrast with the perceived necessity of home and school cooperation in English teaching when there was a risk of failing the English course, which was very necessary to the majority of the respondents.

It is of note that not all of the respondents had reacted to this item or had left some of the statements unanswered. On average nearly half of the respondents had left this item untouched. The number of respondents who reacted to one or more of these statements ranged from N=53 to N=74. Therefore the results need to be treated with great caution as they do not represent the perceptions of all of the respondents of the present study.

Statistically significant correlations

Four background variables which had a statistically significant correlation to item 7 are summarised in table 5. Quite a number of the background variables and the statements did not correlate with each other significantly.

Table 5. Statistical significance of the background variables in relation to statements 7.1-7.11

Necessity of cooperation when	Significance p Number n	**Education**	**English studies**	Number of English teachers	Upper secondary study plans
7.8 Conflicts between the pupil and the English teacher	p n		*,045 58		
7.9 Conflicts between the parent and the English teacher	p n			**,006 53	
7.10 Increasing pupil's motivation in learning English	p n				**,003 66
7.11 Bullying	p n	*,048 56			

As mentioned, the statistical significance of these findings needs to be treated with great caution. It appears that the number of English teachers had a statistically significant relation to the perceived necessity of cooperation when there were conflicts between the parent and the English teacher and that this might be the case with all of the parents of 9th grade pupils. In a similar manner, plans for upper secondary schooling might have an effect on the fact that home and school cooperation is seen as necessary in increasing a pupil's motivation in learning English and that this might be true of the population as a whole.

Ideal state of cooperation

The parents were provided with the opportunity to describe what the ideal situation in home and school cooperation in English teaching could be like. Almost half of the respondents (N=71, 47,7 %) took this opportunity to express their perceptions by replying to this open-ended question. Most answers were relatively short, ranging from a couple of words to a few lines. Ten of the answers were left out of the processing since they either indicated that the respondent did not have an opinion or the comment was otherwise insignificant. To illustrate one of the irrelevant answers, one respondent had written in English

       (1) Good teacher, gentle, nice, cute.

The remaining 61 answers were then categorized into four categories. This was done by using content analysis by Weber (1990: 12). The aim was to find consistent trends among the answers. The answers which shared a similar meaning were grouped together to form a category. The categories for the ideal state of cooperation between home and school cooperation in English teaching were: 1) written feedback from the English teacher, 2) cooperation when problems occur, 3) meetings with the English teacher and 4) reciprocal communication. In the following, these categories are examined and examples of each category are given. The number, percentage and valid percentage of cases are compiled into table 6 below. Statistical significance could not be computed as there were not enough responses.

Table 6. Ideal state of cooperation

Category	n	% of cases	valid % of cases
1 Written feedback from English teacher	25	40,9	16,8
2 Cooperation when problems occur	23	37,7	15,4
3 Meetings with English teacher	8	13,1	5,4
4 Reciprocal communication	5	8,2	3,4
Missing	88	-	59

The parents who responded were evidently interested in receiving written feedback from the English teacher. In fact, they welcomed written feedback in all its forms, ranging from written notes to a few lines in the margin of an English exam. To quote one of the respondents,

> (2) Periodin jälkeen kirjallinen arvio kotiin oppilaan edistymisestä ja mihin erityisesti tulisi kiinnittää huomiota seuraavassa periodissa.
> (Written evaluation concerning a pupil's progress to be sent to home after a teaching period, and to what attention should be paid in the next teaching period.)

The importance of cooperation when problems occurred was emphasized in over a third of the replies. Quite many of the respondents expressed interest in a mutual effort when trying to solve a pupil's problems in learning English. According to one respondent,

> (3) Kun on ongelmia tarvitaan yhteistyötä. Se voisi olla keskustelua opettajan, oppilaan ja vanhempien kanssa. Yritetään löytää ratkaisua ongelmaan.
> (When there are problems, cooperation is needed. It could be a discussion between teacher, pupil and parents. Let's try to find a solution to the problem.)

Meetings with the English teacher represented the ideal situation in home and school cooperation in 13% of the answers. However, few were strongly opposed to meeting the English teacher in person, in particular, in their own home. One of the respondents who was in favor of meeting with the English teacher put it like this:

> (4) Edes kerran vuodessa saisi tavata eng.kielen opettajan vaikka vanhempain illassa, nyt hän on "kasvoton" eli en edes tunne ulkonäöltä.
> (Meeting the English teacher at least once a year, e.g. in a parent-teacher-conference, now he or she is "without a face" meaning that I don't know what he or she even looks like.

A few of the respondents said that the ideal state would be built upon reciprocal communication between home and school in English teaching. Some of these comments emphasized using e-mail as a means of communication:

(5) Vilkas tietojen vaihto esim. e-mailitse jolloin koulussa & kotona
tiedettäisiin mitä on tehty ja mitä tulisi tehdä.
(Active exchange of information eg. via e-mail, so that both home and
school would know what has been done and what should be done.)

When interpreting these findings, it is of note that there were 88 parents who did not respond
to this question. Moreover, the categories are not perfectly exclusive and may include similar
elements with each other. However, when using content analysis, the aim is to find categories
which are likely to be used by different people rather than seeking for exclusive categories
(Weber 1990: 12).

6.2 Parents' experiences of home and school cooperation

After examining the perceptions of the parents, their actual experiences of home and school
cooperation in English teaching were investigated by using five items. These items are
compiled into figure 1 (see chapter 6). The results for these items will be reported next. All
these items were either multiple choice questions (items 3, 5 and 6) or statements that were
answered by using a Likert-scale (items 1 and 4).

Experiences of cooperation

The parents' experiences of home and school cooperation were investigated by using twelve
statements that described different ways of carrying out cooperation. The respondents could
answer this item by choosing the best alternative from a five-point Likert-scale (1
'constantly', 2 'often', 3 'occasionally', 4 'seldom' and 5 'never'). All except one of the
respondents had answered most of the statements in this item. These results are compiled into
table 7.

Table 7. Experiences of cooperation

	n	1 Constantly	2 Often	3 Occasionally	4 Seldom	5 Never	x	s
1.1 I have been contacted by the English teacher	148	0,7	--	--	5,4	93,9	4,91	0,40
1.2 I have contacted the English teacher	148	--	--	0,7	6,1	93,2	4,92	0,29
1.3 I have observed my child doing English homework	148	2,7	12,8	37,2	33,8	13,5	3,42	0,97
1.4 I have leafed through the English text book	148	2,7	6,1	47,3	32,4	11,5	3,44	0,87
1.5 I have discussed topics related to English language learning with my child	148	5,4	26,4	44,6	20,9	2,7	2,89	0,89
1.6 I have observed English lesson at school	147	--	--	--	--	100,0	5,00	0,00
1.7 I have received positive feedback about my child's English language learning	148	2,0	5,4	16,2	19,6	56,8	4,24	1,04
1.8 I have received information on the objectives of English teaching	147	--	0,7	12,9	23,1	63,3	4,49	0,74
1.9 I have received information on the criteria of pupil evaluation in the English language	147	0,7	0,7	7,5	23,8	67,3	4,56	0,72
1.10 I have received information on my child's progress in the English language	146	4,8	9,6	19,9	18,5	47,3	3,94	1,22
1.11 I have received information on my child's English grades	147	38,8	34,0	15,6	4,1	7,5	2,07	1,17
1.12 I have been in contact with the English teacher outside office hours	148	--	--	--	3,4	96,6	4,96	0,18

Descriptive statistics

The majority of the respondents stated that they had never been contacted by the English teacher nor had they contacted the English teacher themselves. The respondents observed the child doing English homework and leafed through the English study books occasionally or seldom. Discussing topics related to English language learning with the child had taken place occasionally or often. None of the respondents had ever observed an English lesson at school. What is more, more than half of the parents had never received positive feedback about their children's English language learning. Information on the objectives of English teaching or on the criteria of pupil evaluation in the English language had never reached the majority of the parents. Almost half of the respondents had never received information on the child's progress in the English language. The respondents received information on the child's English grades constantly or often. Almost no one had been in contact with the English teacher outside office hours.

Judging by these results it appears that there had been no or little actual contact between the parent and the English teacher. There had not been a variety of information from school to home, as parents claimed they had never or seldom received information on the objectives or criteria of assessment in English teaching. What is more, they had not received information or positive feedback concerning their child's progress in learning English. The parents had slightly more frequently participated in forms of cooperation that were not teacher-initiated, such as observing the child doing English homework or leafing through English study books. This is probably due to the fact that both of the schools of the present study send seven report cards with grades to home a year, one after each teaching period.

Statistically significant correlations

Nine background variables which had a statistically significant correlation to item 1 are summarised in table 8. Quite a number of the statements correlated with the background variables.

Table 8. Statistical significance of the background variables in relation to items 1.1-1.12

During my child's secondary school years	Ssignifigance p Number n	Parent's sex	Age	Employment	English profficiency	English use	Rank	Grade	Number of teachers	Upper secondary plans
1.2 I've contacted the English teacher	p n						*,015 148			
1.3 I've observed my child doing English homework	p n				**,003 148					,053 148
1.4 I've leafed through English study books	p n	*,029 148			**,006 148	*,018 146				
1.5 I've discussed topics related to ELL with my child	p n	**,010 148						*,013 146	***,001 146	
1.9 - information on the criteria of evaluation	p n			***,000 147						,055 147
1.10 - information on my child's progress	p n			*,031 146						
1.11 - information on my child's English grades	p n		*,034 146				*,039 147	***,000 145	*,030 145	***,001 147
1.12 I've been in contact with the English teacher outside office hours	p n	*,021 148								

A parent's employment had a highly significant relation to information received on the criteria of pupil evaluation in English language which suggests that this is true of the whole population. A pupil's English grade correlated with the information received on a child's English grades, and this can be the case in the population. Also a pupil's upper secondary schooling plans might have a highly significant relation to receiving information on English grades in secondary school. The number of English teachers was statistically highly related to discussing topics related to English teaching, and one could think this to be true of the population.

Party taking initiative in cooperation

The party taking initiative in cooperation was a multiple choice question and the parents could choose only one of the alternatives: 'English teacher', 'parent', 'pupil', 'form teacher' (Fi. luokanvalvoja) or 'no cooperation'. All except two of the respondents answered this question. The distribution of the answers can be found in table 9.

Table 9. Party taking initiative

		f	%	Valid %
Valid	English teacher	8	5,4	5,4
	Parent	4	2,7	2,7
	Pupil	10	6,7	6,8
	Form teacher	10	6,7	6,8
	No cooperation	115	77,2	78,2
	Total	147	98,7	100,0
	Missing	2	1,3	
Total		149	100,0	

Descriptive statistics

On the one hand, the majority of the respondents (77,2 %) stated that there had been no cooperation. The respondents who chose this alternative were then asked to move on to the next item to answer for which reasons cooperation had not taken place. On the other hand, the

minority of the respondents who claimed that cooperation had existed had chosen from the remaining alternatives quite evenly. Some of them felt that the form teacher or the pupil had been responsible for taking initiative to home and school cooperation. English teacher initiated cooperation had taken place according to a small minority of the respondents, and only 2,7 % of the respondents stated that the parent himself or herself had taken initiative.

Statistically significant correlations

As the replies were not distributed evenly, the computing of statistical significance did not yield many results (see table 10). The only background variable that had a significant statistical relation to this item was the extent of a parent's English studies, but this significance was only almost significant. Thus, conclusions regarding the correlation between the party taking initiative and the extent of a parent's English studies in the population cannot be drawn.

Table 10. Statistical significance of the background variables in relation to item 3

	Significance p Number n	**English studies**
Party taking initiative	p	*,025
	n	146

Reasons for no-cooperation

The reasons for no-cooperation were investigated with six statements that were answered on a Likert-scale with four alternatives (1 'very much', 2 'much', 3 'a little' and 4 'not at all') to discover how much each of these reasons contributed to the fact that there had not been any cooperation. This question was intended to those who responded to the previous question about the party taking initiative (item 3) with 'no cooperation', which was the case in 115 of the replies. However, not as many had answered this item.

Table 11. Reasons for no-cooperation

Reasons for no-cooperation	N	1 Very much	2 Much	3 A little	4 Not at all	x	s
4.1 Lack of time	108	6,5	9,3	32,4	51,9	3,29	0,88
4.2 The child is against it	110	3,6	1,8	18,2	76,4	3,67	0,69
4.3 It is unnecessary	111	5,4	10,8	30,6	53,2	3,32	0,87
4.4 I have bad experiences of cooperating with the English teacher	106	3,8	0,9	7,5	87,7	3,79	0,64
4.5 I feel I cannot influence things at school	109	8,3	18,3	35,8	37,6	3,02	0,94
4.6 I expect the English teacher to take the initiative	114	23,7	28,1	38,6	9,6	2,34	0,94

Descriptive statistics

Lack of time or a pupil objecting home and school cooperation did not have a great effect on why there had not been cooperation. On the one hand, quite a number of the respondents did not think that home and school cooperation was unnecessary. On the other hand, a third considered it to be a little unnecessary. The majority of the parents stated that bad experiences with the English teacher were not at all the reason why there was no cooperation. The parents were also asked whether they felt that they were not able to influence things at school, but it did not appear to be a major reason for non-existing home and school cooperation either. Most of the respondents evidently expected the English teacher to take initiative.

Apparently the respondents did not have negative encounters with the English teacher, or if they did, they did not see it as a reason for not cooperating. Lack of time or the child himself or herself were not major hindrances either. Judging by these results, it appears that the parents expected the English teacher to take the initiative in establishing cooperation and thus, cooperation had not taken place.

Statistically significant correlations

Computing statistical significance yielded a wealth of results as the majority of the respondents had answered this item. Table 12 shows the statistically significant correlations between item 4 and eight background variables. These correlations need to be treated with caution since not everyone out of the 149 parents had responded to this item.

Table 12. Statistical significance of the background variables in relation to items 4.1-4.7

Reasons for no-cooperation	Significance p / Number n	Parent's sex	Age	Employ-ment	English studies	English use	Pupil's sex	English grade	Upper 2ndary plans
4.1 Lack of time	p / n	*,050 / 108	*,034 / 107						*,041 / 108
4.2 The child is against it	p / n			***,000 / 110	**,002 / 109			*,013 / 108	**,003 / 110
4.4 I have bad experiences of cooperating with the English teacher	p / n						*,018 / 106		**,005 / 106
4.5 I feel I cannot influence things at school	p / n					*,048 / 107			**,002 / 109

In the population, a parent's employment and a parent's English studies might have an effect on the statement that a child is against home and school cooperation. Upper secondary schooling plans had a statistically significant relation to three statements: 1) I feel I cannot influence things at school, 2) the child is against home and school cooperation, and 3) have bad experiences of cooperating with the English teacher. Thus, it is possible that this is true of the population as well.

Parents' main sources of information

In order to investigate what the main sources of information in home and school cooperation in English teaching were, the respondents had to react to eight statements which were answered by using a Likert-scale with four alternatives (1 'important', 2 'quite important', 3 'only a little important' and 4 'not at all important'). Everyone but three of the respondents had answered at least some of the statements in this item.

Table 13. Sources of information

Sources of information	N	1 Important	2 Quite important	3 Only a little important	4 Not at all important	x	s
5.1The English teacher	146	71,2	24,0	3,4	1,4	1,35	0,62
5.2 The child	143	76,2	21,0	2,1	0,7	1,27	0,53
5.3 The form teacher	142	23,2	33,8	33,8	9,2	2,29	0,97
5.4 The school's home page	142	7,7	19,0	44,4	28,9	2,94	0,89
5.5 Classmates' parents	143	0,7	9,8	37,8	51,7	3,41	0,69
5.6 Other parents	141	1,4	10,6	34,8	53,2	3,39	0,74
5.7 Exam grades	146	65,1	32,2	2,1	0,7	1,38	0,57
5.8 English study books	139	59,0	28,8	10,1	2,2	1,55	0,76

Descriptive statistics

Clearly the most important source of information was the child. The English teacher was the second most important source of information concerning English teaching Exam grades were important or quite important sources of information as were English study books. The form teacher was quite important or only a little important. Only a little important were the school's home page, classmates' parents and other parents.

It appears that parents received information concerning English teaching mainly from the child or from the English teacher. Exam grades were also an important source of information.

It was of note that the school's home page was only of little importance tool for exchanging information, and so were other parents as well.

Statistically significant correlations

Five background variables which had a statistically significant correlation to item 5 are summarised in table 14.

Table 14. Statistical significance of the background variables in relation to items 5.1-5.8

Sources of information	Significance p / Number n	Education	Employment	English studies	English proficiency	Number of English teachers
5.1 The English teacher	p n				***,001 146	
5.4 The school's home page	p n					*,037 140
5.5 Classmates' parents	p n		,053 143	* ,013 142		
5.7 Exam grades	p n					*** ,000 144
5.8 English study books	p n	***,000 139	*,011 139			

The parent's education was highly significant to the perceived importance of the English teacher as a source of information and the parent's education had a high statistical relation to using English study books as an informant. It is possible that these relations are found in the whole population. The number of English teachers yielded a statistically significant relation to exam grades as a source of information, and this might be true of the population as well.

Means of cooperation

The means of cooperation were studied by using six statements on a four-point Likert scale (1 'constantly', 2 'often', 3 'occasionally' and 4 'seldom') to examine which communication channels had been used and how often. On average seven respondents had left this item unanswered. The results are compiled into table 15.

Table 15. Means of cooperation

Means of cooperation	N	1 Constantly	2 Often	3 Occasionally	4 Seldom	5 Never	x	s
6.1 Telephone	142	--	0,7	2,1	2,8	94,4	4,90	0,41
6.2 SMS	142	--	--	--	2,1	97,9	4,97	0,14
6.3 Written messages	144	--	2,8	3,5	13,9	79,9	4,70	0,67
6.4 E-mail	142	--	0,7	--	1,4	97,9	4,96	0,28
6.5 Message notebook	142	--	--	0,7	4,2	95,1	4,94	0,26
6.6 Meeting in person	141	--	--	2,8	4,3	92,9	4,90	0,38

Descriptive statistics

Written messages were used seldom in cooperation according to the parents. Telephone contacts were rather rare. Meeting in person had not been commonplace: 92,9% of the respondents had never met the English teacher. SMS-messages, e-mails or message notebook had not been used according to the vast majority of the respondents.

Judging by these results, it appears that home and school cooperation had not taken place through any of the most commonly used communication channels. None of the means of cooperation had been in use constantly or even often as only one or two respondents stated that they used written messages, e-mails and telephone contacts with the English teacher often. To sum up, means of cooperation had not been used much in home and school cooperation in English teaching.

Statistically significant correlations

Only one statistically significant correlation was found between item 6 and the background variables (see table 16).

Table 16. Statistical significance of the background variables in relation to items 6.1-6.6

Means of cooperation	Significance p Number n	**Employment**
6.1 Telephone	n p	*,049 142

The parent's employment was only almost significant in relation to the frequency of telephone contacts, so it is slightly possible that this would be true of the population.

7 DISCUSSION

The purpose of the present study was to examine parents' perceptions and experiences of home and school cooperation in English teaching. This study was inspired by the claim that cooperating with parents is part of every teacher's job, and can be used as a means to support a child's English language learning.

Moreover, the Finnish law and the NCC require that schools work with homes. However, many teachers find it difficult to carry out home and school cooperation, which can be partly due to the lack of existing guidelines in the local curricula. Furthermore, teacher education has not recognized the need for training future teachers to cooperate with parents. Home and school cooperation has been widely investigated in elementary school, but has been left almost untouched by research in secondary schools. There has not been any research on this field in specific school subjects, such as in English teaching in this case. In this chapter, there will be a summary of the findings (7.1). The main findings will also be compared with comparable previous studies. In addition, the validity and reliability of the present study will be discussed (7.2). There will also be a discussion on some of the implications of the present study (7.3).

7.1 Summary of the findings

The parents studied seemed to have a positive attitude toward home and school cooperation in English teaching. To begin with, they agreed that it could improve a pupil's academic achievement in the English language. Furthermore, home and school cooperation could support a pupil's growth and development and his or her language skills in the English language. These perceptions of the benefits of cooperation held by the parents are supported by the findings of Eloranta (2000) and Stevenson and Baker (1987) who discovered that parental involvement in schooling had a relation to a pupils' school performance. Desland and Bertrand (2005) pointed out that the benefits of home and school cooperation to a pupil's

school performance were higher grades and higher ambitions. Home and school cooperation was seen as important by the parents in the present study. However, it was not necessarily easy or uncomplicated.

The necessity of cooperation in English teaching was great when there was a risk that a pupil would fail the English course or when there was bullying. According to Salmivalli (2003), bullying can be reduced by home and school cooperation. Also behavioural problems, such as neglects of English homework, conflicts between a pupil and the English teacher and punishments received in English classes were seen as situations were home and school cooperation was perceived necessary. Beveridge (2005) found that pupils did better personally and socially when parents and teachers cooperated. The present study also discovered that problems in a pupil's private life disturbing a his or her school work and difficulties in English language learning would necessitate home and school cooperation according to the parents of the present study. However, cooperation was not seen as necessary when the pupil's English grade was falling or when increasing a pupil's motivation in learning English.

The respondents described the ideal state of home and school cooperation in English teaching to be mostly in written form. They also emphasized the need of cooperation when problems occur. Also meetings with the English teacher and the need for reciprocal communication were mentioned. Judging by these findings, it appears that the parents were not demanding a great deal of time or effort from the teacher to be directed to home and school cooperation. According to a study by Deci and Ryan (1985), teachers have been found to consider home and school cooperation a negative trend that brings constraints and pressure to their work. However, the present study did not find evidence that would support the claim that parents would have high expectations of home and school cooperation in English teaching.

The results concerning the actual experiences of home and school cooperation in English teaching were modest. None of the respondents had observed an English lesson at school. The parents had not been in contact with the English teacher nor had the English teacher contacted them to any great extent. The reasons for this can be multifaceted. On the one hand, the

parents may not be motivated to cooperate or to initiate contacts with the English teacher in secondary school. Korpinen, Korpinen and Husso (1980a) found that parents appreciated home and school cooperation more in elementary school than in secondary school. On the other hand, the parents may feel that as the secondary school is based on the subject-teacher system, home and school cooperation would prove to be an overwhelming task if one aimed at cooperating with all of the child's teachers. The amount of information received from the English teacher was also low: information concerning the criteria of pupil evaluation and the objectives of English teaching were not familiar to the parents. They had not received information on their child's progress in the English language, or any positive feedback about his or her English language learning. Insufficient information flow was a common source for criticism in a study by Korpinen, Korpinen and Husso (1980a). Investigating whether parents were satisfied or not with the amount of information they received was not one of the research questions of the present study. However, answers to the question regarding the ideal state of cooperation indicated that the parents welcome all forms of information and are curious to know more than they did then.

The parents had been slightly more active in the forms of cooperation that take place in the home surroundings, such as observing the child doing English homework, discussing topics related to English language learning or leafing through the English study books. The findings of the present study appear to be in accordance with those of Hudley and Barnes (1993) who found that parents felt positive about providing curriculum enrichment activities at home, such as discussions and monitoring home work.

When investigating reasons for no-cooperation, it clearly stands out that negative encounters with the English teacher did not have a significant role in hindering cooperation. Negative experiences tended to be a typical source for prejudice, thus hindering home and school cooperation, as a study by Soininen (1986) and Eloranta (2000) yielded. In the present study, the parents did not state that the lack of time or the child's resistance had inhibited cooperation in English teaching. According to a study by Soininen (1986) and Korpinen, Korpinen and Husso (1980b), the lack of time was a common reason for parents not to engage in home and school cooperation. Most of the parents of the present study stated that they were

expected the English teacher to take the initiative in establishing home and school cooperation.

The parents' main sources of information were the child, English exam grades and English study books. Räty et al. (2000) discovered that 99% of the parents found it important to receive information of the progress of their child. Bearing that in mind it is understandable that the parents considered English exam grades to be an important source of information. However, one could argue that the numeric evaluation may not convey a great deal of information and thus more information on the progress could be provided in the form of written evaluation or a pupil's self-evaluation.

7.2 Validity and reliability

Most of the concerns of the present study related to its reliability are caused by the use of the questionnaire. Despite its benefits, using a questionnaire includes certain problems and limitations and these have to be kept in mind when analyzing the data. According to Dörnyei (2003: 10-14), there are several disadvantages related to using a questionnaire as a method of data collecting. Firstly, the simplicity and superficiality of answers has to be acknowledged. Respondents may be unreliable and/or unmotivated and may show a tendency to answering what they consider to be socially desirable. Some respondents may agree with statements when they, in fact, are ambivalent or unsure. Furthermore, the possibility of fatigue has to be taken into consideration when constructing the questionnaire. This can be done by limiting the length of the questionnaire to a maximum of four pages and it should not take more than 30 minutes to complete (Dörnyei 2003: 18).

In order to increase the validity of the present study, there was an attempt to construct the questions so that they would be as unambiguous as possible in order to avoid misinterpretations. To prevent the possible fatigue, the questionnaire was only four pages long. However, the problems concerning the honesty of the respondents were impossible to avoid and this needs to be kept in mind when interpreting the results and making conclusions.

Some limitations of the data collecting procedure in the present study need to be acknowledged when interpreting the results. Home and school cooperation was investigated only in two schools and they both were in the town of Kotka. Furthermore, there were only 149 returned questionnaires. In other words, one must be cautious when generalising these findings to be true of all parents in Finland. What is more, the number of English teachers in the schools of the present study was less than ten. In other words, it is possible that other teachers in other schools may engage in different forms of cooperation than the ones examined in the present study.

Analysing the open-ended question can also be criticized. When coding the written answers by using content analysis by Weber (1990: 12), the aim is to discover consistent thematic trends which different people analysing the same data would also consider important and consistent. In the present study, the answers for the open-ended questions were analyzed by one person only. Thus, the results for the item concerning the ideal state of home and school cooperation are exposed to criticism.

The reliability of the present study was examined by computing Cronbach's alphas. These were used to investigate the internal consistency of the questionnaire. In other words, they were used to determine whether the statements in the different items actually measured the same underlying factor. The Cronbach's alphas can be found in detail in appendix 3. These scale reliability coefficients yielded that in fact, only two of the six items suitable for this test measure were acceptable, namely, parents' opinions of home and school cooperation (item 2) and the necessity of home and school cooperation in certain cituations (item 7). The reliability of the results for the remaining items in the questionnaire is therefore questionable.

7.3 Implications

The information gathered with the present study can be implemented in practice when bridging the gap between home and school in English teaching. Parents' positive stance

toward the outcomes of cooperation could serve as a starting point for creating partnerships between home and school. Knowing that they perceived home and school cooperation as a means to improve a pupil's academic achievement and language skills could help in motivating collaboration. As the cooperation was not easy or uncomplicated to them, some groundwork should be done to overcome the perceived difficulties to make cooperating with the English teacher as effortless as possible for parents.

English teachers should not hesitate to contact the parents when a pupil is facing the threat of failing the English course or is being bullied, given that those were the situations where parents perceived cooperation very necessary. Parents valued cooperation when problems occur, and they hoped that the English teacher would not hesitate to contact them then. Also when a pupil demonstrated behavioural problems or neglected English home work parents felt that cooperation was necessary. Thus, English teachers could solve problems that occur in the classroom with the assistance of the parents.

The parents welcome all information and in different forms. Most of all, they wish to receive written information. This means that the ideal state in cooperation would not be time-consuming or laborious, but could be done with a little effort e.g. when correcting English exams or essays which pupils in secondary school are required to take home for the parents to sign. Simultaneously, parents could receive also positive feedback concerning their child's progress in the English language. The most popular forms of cooperation were the ones that can be done at home with the pupil, such as discussing topics related to English language learning and observing the child doing English home work. Parents could be encouraged to do so more. For instance, providing parents with a few lines of written evaluation alongside the English exam could serve as a starting point for a constructive discussion at home between the parent and the pupil.

The party taking initiative in home and school cooperation had been in many cases the child or the form teacher (Fi. luokanvalvoja). To avoid using third parties in cooperation, also the English teacher could initiate contacts. The lack of initiative from the English teacher's side was seen as the main reason for no-cooperation. The parents wished the English teacher to

invite them to cooperate. This is encouraging for those who have been hesitant to involve the parents in English teaching.

The parents' main sources of information were the child, English grades and English study books. These three sources could be utilized more when developing home and school cooperation to a more informative direction. The parents could be encouraged to talk with their children more and to leaf through the study books more often. More information could be carried on the English exams the pupils take home. For instance, the exams could include a written evaluation from the teacher and a pupil's self-assessment so the parents could form an overall impression of the pupil's progress in the English language. The school's home page was not among the main sources of information. However, the use of the Internet could be increased to share information between home and school. For instance, there could be an on-line notice board informing the parents of upcoming exams or essay dead-lines.

8 CONCLUSION

Parents of secondary school pupils had a positive outlook on home and school cooperation in English teaching. They agreed that it can improve the pupil's academic achievement and English language learning, and that it could support his or her healthy growth and development. However, they did not perceive cooperating with the English teacher as easy or uncomplicated. There were not many contacts between the English teacher and parents in the form of personal meetings, phone calls or e-mails. This can be due to the fact that the English teacher had not initiated contacts with parents, which for the most parents was the reason why there had not been cooperation. A conclusion could be drawn that parents would be willing to cooperate in English teaching if only the English teacher expressed the interest to involve parents of secondary school pupils.

There were many circumstances where parents perceived home and school cooperation. In particular these were times when the pupil was facing the threat of failing an English course or was bullied. It was partly surprising that increasing a child's motivation or supporting him or her when English grade was falling were not seen as necessary situations for home and school cooperation. Then again, problems related to discipline in the English classes were of parents' interest, and they wished to know about them. They emphasized the need for cooperation when there were problems and difficulties. This could indicate that the teachers do not need to operate on their own to solve all the problems in the classroom, but could gain from the help of parents in helping the child to overcome these difficulties.

The most important sources of information were English grades and the child. One could think that this kind of information is not adequate to give parents multifaceted information on the progress and development of a child's English language. Parents wished to receive more information, mainly in the form of written messages. It became evident that parents were mostly interested in the forms of cooperation that could be carried out at home, such as observing the child doing English home work, leafing through English study books or discussing topics related to English language learning. Creating more opportunities and tasks

that could enrich the English curriculum in cooperation with homes could be a starting point for future research.

The present study arouse some suggestions for further research. The topic of home and school cooperation could be studied by approaching it from a more practical point of view, for instance, by investigating what the parent and the child could do at home to improve his or her motivation in English language learning. The role of parents in motivating their child has been studied, and it appears that their attitudes are reflected in the child. Thus, it could be a source for improved academic achievement in the English language. Moreover, a study could be carried out to find out how the English curriculum could be designed in cooperation with parents.

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APPENDIX 1 QUESTIONNAIRE

Arvoisa 9.-luokkalaisen huoltaja

Olen englanninopettajaopiskelija Jyväskylän yliopistosta ja teen tutkielmaa englannin kielen oppiaineeseen. Tutkielmani aihe on **kodin ja koulun yhteistyö yläkoulun englanninopetuksessa**. Tällä kyselyllä kerään tietoa siitä, millaisia kokemuksia ja mielipiteitä 9.-luokkalaisten huoltajilla on tästä aiheesta.

Pian peruskoulunsa päättävän oppilaan huoltajana Sinulla on lähes kolmen vuoden kokemus tutkimukseni aiheesta.

Toivon siis Sinun vastaavan mahdollisimman totuudenmukaisesti alla oleviin kysymyksiin ja laittavan vastaukset takaisin koululle oheiseen kirjekuoreen suljettuna.

Jokainen palautettu vastaus on tutkimukselleni tärkeä!

Voit vastata nimettömänä. Vastaukset käsitellään luottamuksellisesti.

Kerään täytetyt kyselykaavakkeet takaisin oppilailta henkilökohtaisesti, joten koulun henkilökunnalla ei ole mahdollisuutta tutustua niihin.

Kyselylomakkeet hävitetään työn valmistuttua, eikä valmiissa työssä mainita koulun nimeä.

Vastaan mielelläni lisäkysymyksiin joko puhelimitse tai sähköpostilla.

Kiitos avustasi!

Ystävällisin terveisin Heidi Wass

p. 050-XXX XXXX   healwass@cc.jyu.fi

Esitiedot 1
Vastaajaa koskevat tiedot

Ympyröi sopivin vaihtoehto.

1. Olen 1 isä 2 äiti

2. Olen iältäni 1 30-40 v.   2 41-50 v.

3 51-60 v.   4 61+ v.

3. Mikä seuraavista vaihtoehdoista vastaa parhaiten koulutustaustaasi?

1 peruskoulu/kansakoulu
2 lukio/oppikoulu
3 ammattikoulutus/opistoaste
4 ammattikorkea
5 yliopisto

4. Tämänhetkinen työllisyystilanteesi

1 ansiotyössä tai itsenäinen ammatinharjoittaja
2 työtön tai lomautettu
3 opiskelija
4 eläkkeellä tai pitkäaikaisesti sairas
5 äitiys-/isyys-/ vanhempainlomalla työstä
6 hoitaa omaa kotitaloutta
7 muu, mikä?
_____

5. Kauanko olet opiskellut englantia koulussa?

1 yli 10 vuotta
2 7-10 vuotta
3 3-7 vuotta
4 1-3 vuotta
5 alle vuoden
6 en ole opiskellut englantia

6. Millaiseksi arvioisit oman englannintaitosi?

1 erinomainen
2 hyvä
3 kohtuullinen
4 heikko
5 en osaa

7. Kuinka usein käytät englantia?
(*esim. puhut englantia tai kirjoitat englanniksi*)

1 päivittäin
2 viikoittain
3 kuukausittain
4 1-2 kertaa vuodessa
5 harvemmin kuin kerran vuodessa
6 en käytä englantia

Esitiedot 2
Oppilasta koskevat tiedot

Ympyröi sopivin vaihtoehto. Kohdissa 3 ja 4 kirjoita vastauksesi viivalle.

1. Lapseni on 1 poika 2 tyttö
2. Lapseni on 1 esikoinen 2 sisarussarjan keskellä oleva lapsi 3 kuopus
3. Lapseni englannin arvosana edellisessä jaksoarvostelussa ____
4. Lapseni englanninopettajien lukumäärä vuosiluokilla 7-9 ____
5. Lapseni jatko-opintosuunnitelma 1 ammattikoulu 2 lukio 3 muu

Teemakysymykset

Ympyröi sopivin vaihtoehto alla oleviin väittämiin. Vastatessasi pohdi kokemuksiasi koko lapsesi yläasteajalta, mutta vain englannin opetuksen kannalta.

1. Yläasteen aikana

	Jatkuvasti	Usein	Toisinaan	Harvoin	Ei koskaan
1. englanninopettaja on ottanut minuun yhteyttä	1	2	3	4	5
2. olen ottanut itse yhteyttä englanninopettajaan	1	2	3	4	5
3. olen seurannut englanninläksyjen tekemistä	1	2	3	4	5
4. olen selaillut englannin oppikirjoja	1	2	3	4	5
5. olen keskustellut lapseni kanssa englanninopiskelua koskevista asioista	1	2	3	4	5
6. olen käynyt seuraamassa englannintunteja koululla	1	2	3	4	5
7. olen saanut positiivista oppilaan englanninopiskelua koskevaa palautetta	1	2	3	4	5
8. olen saanut tietoa englannin opetuksen tavoitteista	1	2	3	4	5
9. olen saanut tietoa englannin arviointiperusteista	1	2	3	4	5
10. olen saanut tietoa lapseni edistymisestä englannissa	1	2	3	4	5
11. olen saanut tietoa lapseni englannin arvosanoista	1	2	3	4	5
12. olen ollut yhteydessä englanninopettajaan virka-ajan ulkopuolella (muulloin kuin arkisin 8-16)	1	2	3	4	5

2. Mielestäni kodin ja koulun yhteistyö englanninopetuksessa..

	Täysin samaa mieltä	Samaa mieltä	Eri mieltä	Täysin eri mieltä
1. parantaa oppilaan koulumenestystä englannissa	1	2	3	4
2. tukee oppilaan kasvua ja kehitystä	1	2	3	4
3. tukee oppilaan kielitaidon kehittymistä	1	2	3	4
4. tukee minua kasvattajana	1	2	3	4
5. on tärkeää	1	2	3	4
6. on helppoa ja vaivatonta	1	2	3	4

3. Keneltä koet aloitteen kodin ja koulun yhteistyöhön tulleen?

1 Englanninopettajalta **2** Itseltäni **3** Oppilaalta **4** Luokanvalvojalta **5** Yhteistyötä ei ole ollut

4. Jos valitsit edellisen kysymyksen vaihtoehdon 5 eli yhteistyötä ei ole ollut, kuinka paljon seuraavat asiat ovat vaikuttaneet?
(ympyröi jokaisesta kohdasta 1-6 yksi numero.)

	Erittäin paljon	Paljon	Jonkin verran	Ei lainkaan
1. ajanpuute	1	2	3	4
2. lapseni on sitä vastaan	1	2	3	4
3. en näe yhteistyötä tarpeelliseksi	1	2	3	4
4. huonot kokemukset englanninopettajan kanssa toimimisesta	1	2	3	4
5. koen, etten voi vaikuttaa asioihin	1	2	3	4
6. odotan aloitteen tulevan opettajalta	1	2	3	4
7. muu, mikä? _____				

5. Kuinka tärkeinä pidät seuraavia tiedonlähteitä englanninopetusta koskevan tiedon saamisessa? *(ympyröi jokaisesta kohdasta 1-8 yksi numero)*

	Tärkeä	Melko tärkeä	Vain vähän tärkeä	Ei lainkaan tärkeä
1. Opettaja	1	2	3	4
2. Lapseni	1	2	3	4
3. Luokanvalvoja	1	2	3	4
4. Koulun kotisivut	1	2	3	4
5. Luokkatovereiden vanhemmat	1	2	3	4
6. Muut vanhemmat	1	2	3	4
7. Koenumerot	1	2	3	4
8. Oppikirjat	1	2	3	4
9. muu, mikä? _____				

6. Mitä seuraavista yhteydenpitotavoista on käytetty lapsesi yläasteaikana englanninopetuksessa?
Ympyröi sopivin vaihtoehto 1-6.

	jatkuvasti	usein	toisinaan	harvoin	ei koskaan
1. puhelinkeskustelu	1	2	3	4	5
2. tekstiviesti	1	2	3	4	5
3. käsinkirjoitettu viesti	1	2	3	4	5
4. sähköposti	1	2	3	4	5
5. reissuvihko	1	2	3	4	5
6. henkilökohtainen tapaaminen	1	2	3	4	5
muu, mikä? _____					

7. Kuinka tarpeelliseksi arvioit yhteistyön englanninopettajan kanssa seuraavissa tilanteissa?

Vastaa vain <u>niihin kohtiin, jotka koskevat lapsesi yläasteaikana koettuja tilanteita</u>. Voit jättää vastaamatta tähän kysymykseen, jos mitään alla kuvatuista tilanteista ei ole ollut kohdallasi.

	Tarpeellista	Melko tarpeellista	Vain vähän tarpeellista	Ei lainkaan tarpeellista
1. arvosanassa on laskua	1	2	3	4
2. englanninkurssia uhkaa hylkääminen	1	2	3	4
3. opiskeluvaikeudet englannin kielessä	1	2	3	4
4. englanninläksyjen jatkuva laiminlyönti	1	2	3	4
5. koulunkäyntiä vaikeuttavat yksityiselämän ongelmat tai vastoinkäymiset	1	2	3	4
6. käyttäytymisvaikeudet englannintunneilla	1	2	3	4
7. englannintunneilla saadut rangaistukset	1	2	3	4
8. ristiriidat opettajan ja oppilaan välillä	1	2	3	4
9. ristiriidat vanhemman ja opettajan välillä	1	2	3	4
10. englannin opiskelumotivaation parantaminen	1	2	3	4
11. koulukiusaamiseen puuttuminen	1	2	3	4

8. **Voisitko kuvailla lyhyesti, millainen olisi ihannetilanne kodin ja koulun yhteistyössä englanninopetuksen osalta?**

_____

_____

_____

_____

9. **Onko sinulla kommentteja, palautetta tai muuta lisättävää?**

Kiitos ajastasi! ☺

APPENDIX 2 RESPONDENT DEMOGRAPHICS

Table 2 Respondents' sex – number and percentage of cases

	f	%
Male	29	19,5
Female	120	80,5
Total	149	100,0

Table 3 Respondents' age – number, percentage and valid percentage of cases

		f	%	Valid %
Valid	30-40	33	22,1	22,3
	41-50	93	62,4	62,8
	51-60	22	14,8	14,9
	Total	148	99,3	100,0
	Missing	1	0,7	
Total		149	100,0	

Table 4 Respondents' educational background – number and percentage of cases

	f	%
Basic education	19	12,8
Upper secondary school	16	10,7
Vocational school	82	55,0
Polytechnic	16	10,7
University	16	10,7
Total	149	100,0

Table 5 Respondents' employment

	f	%
Employed or self-employed	126	84,6
Unemployed	12	8,1
Student	1	0,7
Retired or on sick leave	4	2,7
Stay-at-home	4	2,7
Other	2	1,3
Total	149	100,0

Table 6 The extent of respondents' English studies and English proficiency

		English skills					Total
		Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	None	
Years of studying English	>10	3	11	20	4	0	38
	7-10	1	9	28	8	0	46
	3-7	0	4	25	16	0	45
	1-3	0	0	3	7	0	10
	<1	0	0	1	0	0	1
	0	0	0	0	4	4	8
Total		4	24	77	39	4	148

[1]Correlation between the extent of parents' English studies and their English skills, $x2=106,244$, $p=0,000$, $df=20$

Table 7 Respondents' use of English – number, percentages and valid percentages of cases

	f	%	Valid %
Daily	7	4,7	4,8
Weekly	26	17,4	17,7
Monthly	36	24,2	24,5
!-2 times a year	42	28,2	28,6
Less than once a year	22	14,8	15,0
Never	14	9,4	9,5
Total	147	98,7	100,0
Missing	2	1,3	
Total	149	100,0	

Table 8 Pupils' sex and rank among siblings - percentage of cases

		Sex, %		Total
		Boy	Girl	
Rank, %	First-born	20,1	28,2	48,3
	Middle	4,7	10,1	14,8
	Last-born	16,1	20,8	36,9
Total		40,9	59,1	100,0

[1] Correlation between pupil's sex and rank among siblings, x2=938, p=0,626, df=2

Table 9 Number of English teachers – number, percentage and valid percentage of cases

	f	%	Valid %
1,00	122	81,9	83,0
2,00	17	11,4	11,6
3,00	6	4,0	4,1
6,00	1	0,7	0,7
8,00	1	0,7	0,7
Total	147	98,7	100,0
Missing	2	1,3	
Total	149	100,0	

Table 10 Pupils' upper secondary schooling plans – number and percentage of cases

		f	%		
Valid	Vocational	40	26,8		
	General	87	58,4		
	Other	22	14,8		
	Total	149	100,0		

APPENDIX 3 CRONBACH'S ALPHAS

Note that a reliability coefficient of **.70** or higher is considered "acceptable" in most Social Science research situations

_____

Item	Cronbach's alpha
Parents' opinions of home and school cooperation in English teaching	.810*
2.1, 2.2, 2.3, 2.4, 2.5 and 2.6	
The necessity of home and school cooperation in English teaching	.949*
7.1, 7.2, 7.3, 7.4, 7.5, 7.6, 7.7, 7.8, 7.9, 7.10 and 7.11	
Parents' experiences of home and school cooperation in English teaching	.667
1.1, 1.2, 1.3, 1.4, 1.5, 1.6, 1.7, 1.8, 1.9, 1.10, 1.11 and 1.12	
Reasons for no cooperation	.528
4.1, 4.2, 4.3, 4.4, 4.5 and 4.6	
Sources of information in English teaching	.653
5.1, 5.2, 5.3, 5.4, 5.5, 5.6, 5.7 and 5.8	
Means of cooperation	.697
6.1, 6.2, 6.3, 6.4, 6.5 and 6.6	

_____

Excluded items: 3 (Party taking initiative) and 8 (Ideal state of cooperation)