

2<sup>ND</sup> AND 3<sup>RD</sup> GRADERS' ATTITUDES TOWARDS THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE:  
Attitudes before and after studying English at school

Master's thesis

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Tiivistelmä – Abstract <p>Oppilaat aloittavat Suomessa englannin opiskelun useimmiten 3. luokalla. Englannin kieli on kuitenkin vahvasti läsnä Suomessa esimerkiksi mediassa ja ulkomaalaisten kautta. Monet perheet myös matkustavat ulkomaille. Siksi onkin syytä olettaa, että lapsilla on asenteita englannin kieltä kohtaan jo ennen kuin he aloittavat sen opiskelun koulussa. Asenteilla on suuri merkitys englannin kielen oppimistuloksien kannalta.</p> <p>Tämän tutkimuksen tavoitteena oli tutkia millaisia asenteita lapsilla on englannin kieltä kohtaan 2. luokan keväällä ja kuinka asenteet ovat muuttuneet 3. luokan kevääseen mennessä, kun he ovat opiskelleet englantia suurin piirtein yhden lukuvuoden verran. Tutkimus käsittelee myös lasten englannin kontakteja vapaa-ajalla ja heidän vanhempiansa asenteita englannin kieltä kohtaan, sekä näiden mahdollista yhteyttä lasten asenteisiin. Tutkimus toteutettiin kyselytutkimuksena. Siihen osallistui 15 lasta, jotka vastasivat kyselyyn sekä 2. että 3. luokalla. Tuloksia tarkastellaan koko ryhmän osalta, sekä kaksi oppilasta on valittu tarkempaan tarkasteluun negatiivisemmista ja positiivisemmista asenteista.</p> <p>Tutkimuksen tulosten perusteella lasten asenteet englantia kohtaan ovat etupäässä positiivisia ja englannin opiskelu nähdään mielekkäänä. Asenteet ovat kuitenkin muuttuneet hieman negatiivisemmiksi 3. luokan kevääseen mennessä.</p>	
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## 1. INTRODUCTION

English is a global language, and it is common in many areas of life also in Finland. The majority of Finnish children start to learn English around the age of nine. However, it is likely that they have had some contact with the English language even before starting to learn it formally at school. English is also used a lot in the media. For instance, many TV shows shown in Finland are spoken in English and only subtitled in Finnish. The popular culture – music, in particular, in Finland appears in English in a large part. In many ways English is also the main language of the Internet. The influence of the Internet shows no signs of weakening and the Internet is probably also used by younger children than before. Nowadays, it is quite normal for Finnish families to travel abroad and many children have been abroad before school age. Thus it is reasonable to assume that children have a significant amount of contact with the English language all the time in their everyday life, even before they start learning it at school and using it actively. Since they have some contact with English, it could be assumed that they have also formed attitudes about the English language even before starting to learn it.

The aim of this thesis is to study the attitudes of Finnish 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> graders towards the English language. Children's free time activities involving the English language will also be studied in order to see how much contact with the English language they have outside the school. The study also investigates if there is any connection between the students' and their parents' attitudes about the English language. Children's attitudes towards English may be a significant factor in successful learning of the language. Thus the information about these attitudes is useful for teaching English for children.

The empirical part of this study was conducted in two parts: when the children selected as the focus in this study were finishing the 2<sup>nd</sup> grade and when the same children were on the spring term of the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade their attitudes were surveyed with the help of a questionnaire. Thus the study aimed to show if the children's uses of and attitudes towards the English language changed during approximately one year. This period was chosen for the study since in Finland the children usually start to have English lessons on the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade. This was the case with all the children in this study, too.

The knowledge that this study provides may be useful especially for teachers who teach English for 3<sup>rd</sup> graders who are starting to learn English for the first time at school. Attitudes and motivation are an essential part of a successful learning experience at school. Children's attitudes towards the English language may affect significantly their interest to learn English and, as it is supposed in this thesis, they may have formed attitudes towards English already on the 2<sup>nd</sup> grade, and these attitudes will affect their learning in the first formal English lesson at school. Thus, it would be useful for teachers to be aware of these attitudes. Positive attitudes and motivation in language learning are essential in order to get the students to learn English on the optimum level, and, consequently, schools should pay attention to motivation problems in language teaching. (Pihko 2007: 125) In addition, knowing more about 2<sup>nd</sup> graders' free time activities concerning English will enable teachers to take this information into account in their teaching. As the present study will show, 2<sup>nd</sup> graders have a significant amount of contact with the English language on their free time. For teachers this means that they can assume that when children start learning English formally on the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade they already have some knowledge of the language, whether passive or active. Also the knowledge of how 3<sup>rd</sup> graders use English after learning it for almost one school year may help teachers to plan their teaching. Having more knowledge of the ways in which students of that age generally like to use English on their free time might enable teachers to encourage their students to use more English outside the school.

To provide background for this study, the use of English in Finland is discussed, as well as the opportunities for informal learning of English in Finland. An overview of studying English in Finland and previous studies about Finnish students' attitudes towards learning English are also presented. As the study concentrates on the students' attitudes, attitudes are discussed alongside other factors affecting language learning, such as motivation. After the background information, the carrying out of the research is presented. The results are presented at first question by question, following the order of the questions in the questionnaires. After that, the possible relationships between the students' free time activities and their attitudes towards English, as well as between the parents' attitudes and the children's attitudes are discussed. Lastly, the answers of two individual students, one with negative and the other with positive attitudes towards English are presented and discussed. All results and their possible implications are discussed at the end.

## 2. ENGLISH IN FINLAND

### 2.1 English usage in Finland

The assumption in this study is that children are in contact with the English language in various ways in their everyday lives, and these contacts will have some effect on children's attitudes about English which are the main focus of this study. Thus in this chapter the general presence of the English language in the Finnish society is discussed in order to get an overview about the opportunities of children to encounter English in Finland. The English language is present in Finland in many areas of the society. TV and the Internet have brought the English language media close to everyone and popular culture is heavily under the influence of English language. For instance, the National Survey on the English Language in Finland (Leppänen et al. 2011) showed that for 15-24-year old Finnish people English is a natural part of their everyday lives, including their social life, free time and hobbies. It is natural for them that English is used and needed while using Internet, and they read more English texts online than printed media. (Leppänen et al. 2011) For 95% of Finnish 9<sup>th</sup> graders, the most common foreign language used with media is English. (Luukka et al. 2008: 181-184) The economic globalization has also strengthened the role of English, as the number of transnational companies and the use of English as the lingua franca of business have increased. (Leppänen et al. 2011: 19) There are also more speakers of foreign languages in Finland than ever before. In 1900 only 0.3% of the Finnish population spoke some other language as their mother tongue than one of the official languages: Finnish, Swedish or Sami. In 2013 the percentage was 5.31%. ("Väestö" 2014)

The results of the National Survey of English language in Finland (Leppänen et al. 2011) demonstrate how much presence English has in Finland. The survey had almost 1500 respondents aged 15–79. They heard or saw English a lot in their everyday life: 79% heard or saw English on the street, 73% in shops and stores, 70% in restaurants and 61% in public transport. (Leppänen et al. 2011: 66) These are all places where also 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> graders may easily hear or see English. Finnish people also generally consider the knowledge of English important: 97% of the respondents agreed with the statement that young people must know English (Leppänen et al. 2011: 79), and 90% of the respondents thought that the importance of English will have increased in 20 years' time (Leppänen et al. 2011: 143). Since social environment affects attitudes (Garrett 2010:

22), the general attitudes about English probably have some effect on children's attitudes.

Nowadays a poor proficiency in English rules out possibilities in higher education and in working life, and reduces the possibilities to participate in society (Pihko 2007: 125). In the 2000s, English became truly a part of everyday life in Finland, and many big companies operating in Finland started to use English as their intra-corporate language (Leppänen and Nikula 2008: 19). When companies and scientific communities use English for their research and communication, the information of certain fields may be available only in English. People may be marginalized if they do not know English at all. English is needed not only when tourists ask for directions, but in social groups where some participants are foreigners, or when communicating with clients and business partners. Professionals may expect to have English speaking clients, including cashiers and plumbers. There are everyday products and even medicine that are named in English and contain information only in English. Not knowing English may cause feelings of embarrassment: often the general presupposition is that everyone knows English. In Helsinki there are even restaurants and bars where the staff starts the customer service automatically in English, and may not be able to speak Finnish at all. (Väärämäki 2014)

## **2.2 Informal learning of English**

As discussed in the previous chapter, English is used in various contexts in the Finnish society. Thus it can be assumed that also children have contact with the English language in their everyday lives. These encounters with the English language may lead to acquiring some knowledge of English. In this study this knowledge that the children have acquired outside the school is referred to as informal learning. This study does not concentrate on whether or not the students have acquired knowledge of English through informal learning, but informal learning is rather seen as a possible factor in forming the students' attitudes about the English language.

Informal learning means learning that takes place outside educational establishments and does not follow a specified curriculum. Informal learning originates accidentally, unconsciously and spontaneously. It is a part of everyday life and it occurs through

daily interactions, for instance at home. The significance of the media in terms of informal learning in contemporary children's lives is high since the media constitute the most significant leisure-time pursuit. (Buckingham 2003: 5) The Internet, in particular, is one of the sites in which children and young people may engage in a great deal of informal learning. Many of new media forms are characterized by interactivity (Buckingham 2003: 27). Internet communities are, in fact, an example of a site in which informal learning takes place, since through interaction with other community members it is possible to develop shared understandings of concepts and values, as well as learn various skills and knowledge (Davies 2006: 212). Buckingham (2003: 201-203) refers to Ivan Illich's (1973) ideas of a future of 'deschooling' when alternative forms of learning, such as computer technology, have become available to everyone. Informal 'learning communities' on the Internet and the potential for communication across the world can provide an effective means of sharing skills and resources, leading also to informal learning.

Implicit learning of languages, the learning that takes place in an incidental manner without intention and awareness, is more typical of children than adults, and it tends to be easier for children to acquire languages implicitly outside formal learning conditions (Bhatia and Ritchie 2009: 552). It is generally agreed that age is a factor in second language acquisition, and the Critical Period Hypothesis suggests that languages are learned in a much more effective way before a certain age, although the details of the significance of age are widely debated and there are various views about the issue (Dewaele 2009: 635). Since English is widely used in Finland, in particular, in the media, children have various possibilities for informal learning of English. No doubt the contacts children have with the English language outside the school affect their ability to learn English at school. Hence, in this study one of its key assumptions is that the ways students are in contact with the English language outside the school may affect both their attitudes towards the English language and their learning of English at school.

Media uses are not, however, the only way in which children can be in contact with the English language. For example, they can have contact with speakers of other languages either in Finland or while travelling abroad. At the same time, the media most probably provides children with the most common English contact in general, since the English language is heavily present in all types of media in Finland and children have access to many types of media. In a study by Johnson (2008: 41) about Finnish families with

young children, almost all households reported having a TV (nearly 100%), and the majority of them had a computer (94%) and an Internet connection (83%). Previous studies show that Finnish children use all of these regularly, and are also in contact with the English language while using them.

The majority of 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> graders (75%) watch TV every day (Matikkala and Lahikainen 2005: 93-95). In Hyytiä's (2008) study of Finnish 4.-6. graders, all students watched English TV shows, and around two thirds of them watched them every day (Hyytiä 2008: 37-42). According to a research by Matikkala and Lahikainen (2005), nearly all Finnish 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> graders use the computer and 64% of them use it at least once a week (Matikkala and Lahikainen 2005: 93-95). The use of the Internet seems to be rising fast among children, since, according to Kuusisto and Kotilainen (2011), in 2011 already 78% of children and young people used the Internet every day, and children started using the Internet approximately at the age of 8. The favourite computer games of the 1.-3. graders in the study (Kuusisto and Kotilainen 2011) included some English speaking games, such as Club Penguin, Star Wars, Wow and Warhammer Runescape. Moreover, their favourite web sites included sites which are either in English or have games in English, and some of the children used Youtube as well. (Kuusisto and Kotilainen 2011) In Hyytiä's (2008) study, around a third of the 4.-6. graders used English daily while playing computer games and using Internet. Especially boys used English also while communicating with foreigners through Internet. (Hyytiä 2008: 37-42) Luukka et al. (2008) conclude in their study that the popularity of international game web sites explains at least partly that on the 9<sup>th</sup> grade, 20% of boys read web sites more often in another language than in Finnish, compared to 8% of girls (Luukka et al. 2008: 181-184). Besides the popularity of computer games, most of 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> graders (69%) play console games at least once a week while nearly all of them play them sometimes (Matikkala and Lahikainen 2005: 93-95). Music is also an important contact with the English language, since in Hyytiä's (2008) study of Finnish 4.-6. graders, all students listened to English music (Hyytiä 2008: 37-42). There are differences in the media uses between boys and girls. According to the research about the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> graders, boys watch TV, use the computer and play console games more often than girls (Matikkala and Lahikainen 2005: 93-95).

In the light of these previous studies it is reasonable to assume that most 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> graders are in contact with the English language regularly in their everyday lives

through TV, games and Internet. Hence, children have opportunities for informal learning of English in their everyday lives, but naturally this does not mean that informal learning takes place. However, there is proof that informal learning does take place at least in some cases. For instance, In Hyytiä's (2008) study of 4<sup>th</sup> – 6<sup>th</sup> grade students, the students believed they had learned English informally and teachers saw students' English contacts outside the school to improve vocabulary and to encourage especially boys to use English (Hyytiä 2008: 2). A study (Ermi, Heliö and Mäyrä 2004) of 10–12-year-old Finnish children who regularly play computer or console games, discovered that learning does take place, even though children saw games generally as purely entertainment, and did not think playing games had any other benefit than having something fun to do and passing time (Ermi et al. 2004: 63). However, the most essential thing that the children who were interviewed in this study thought that they could learn by playing games was English. Most of their favourite games were in English and they learned words, while hardly noticing it when playing an interesting game. The children often asked a parent or an older sibling to translate unfamiliar words to them, but they were also ready to go through some trouble themselves in order to understand English texts, for instance by looking them up in a dictionary, if the texts were seen as significant for the game. (Ermi et al. 2004: 66) Games offer a context and clues about the meanings of the words, and key words are often repeated many times, which makes learning them easier. Parents who were interviewed believed that playing games was useful in learning English vocabulary and pronunciation. To be able to understand a game may also motivate the children to learn English at school. One parent told that her son was motivated to start learning English on the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade because it would enable him to understand a certain game. (Ermi et al. 2004: 40–69) In a study by Luukka et al. (2008), 73% of foreign language teachers agreed partly or completely that playing computer games is useful in learning a foreign language. The majority of boys (84%) on the 9<sup>th</sup> grade, agreed partly or completely with the statement, compared to 57% of girls. Boys also play games more often than girls which could explain the difference in opinions. (Luukka et al. 2008: 183)

However, the active use of English on free time may not always come across as successful learning at school. In Linnakylä's (2010) case study about Finnish 8<sup>th</sup> grade students and their informal English learning, the students themselves thought that they had learned English informally mostly through entertaining practices such as movies, TV and music. However, the practices correlating positively and significantly with a

high achievement in English were reading novels, newspapers, instructions and manuals, watching TV and visiting forums. Linnakylä concludes that school education still tends to value traditional literacy while young people are active in various socially and technologically mediated literacy practices. (Linnakylä 2010: 90–97)

### **2.3 Studying English in Finland**

The subjects of this study are children who are starting to learn English at school. The focus of the study is on the children's attitudes towards English, and not on evaluating their learning. However, the school may significantly influence these attitudes. Moreover, a significant issue in this study is whether the students' attitudes have changed after they have started to learn English formally at school. In this chapter the general information about studying English in Finland is presented in order to provide context for this study.

In the 1960s English became the most common foreign language to be studied in Finnish schools, and in 1967–1988 74% of the students were learning English at school (Leppänen and Nikula 2008: 18). During the 1970s and 1980s the importance of the English language for Finnish people grew due to economic and cultural westernization. English was used more and more for instance in youth media, advertising and popular music. In the 1970s the Finnish school system was reformed into the comprehensive school system. It became compulsory for all students to study the second national language and at least one foreign language, which was most commonly English. (Leppänen and Nikula 2008: 18) The parents of the students in this study went to the comprehensive school most probably roughly in the 1980s or possibly in the 1970s. Thus they are a generation that is generally used to the presence of the English language in Finland, both at school and in everyday life.

In the National Survey of English language in Finland (Leppänen et al. 2011), approximately 15% of the respondents reported not having studied English at all. However, there are large differences between the age groups. Among 15–44-year-old people less than 1% had not studied English, while among 45–64-year-old people 23% and among 65–79-year-old people 51% had not studied English. (Leppänen et al. 2011: 93-94) Nowadays at least two out of three people know English and the rest often

understand some of the most common words. After all, in the Finnish language many English words are commonly used in a slightly modified form: *shoppailla* (to shop), *drinkki* (a drink), *printata* (to print), *bisnes* (business) etc. (Väärämäki 2014).

Nowadays foreign languages are studied by younger children than before. Since 2000, it has become more common to start studying the first foreign language before the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade. In 2009, 8.1% of 1<sup>st</sup> graders and 13.9 % of 2<sup>nd</sup> graders studied a foreign language. (Kangasvieri et al. 2011: 9) English is clearly the most common foreign language to be learned. In 2012, 90.1% of the students in Finland chose English as their obligatory foreign language. In the 7<sup>th</sup>–9<sup>th</sup> grades nearly all (99.4%) of the students study English. (“Suurin osa peruskoululaisista opiskelee englantia” 2013) Also at the level of higher education in Finland, English becomes more common all the time. For instance, at a certain Finnish school of economics all master’s degree programmes are in English. Studies conducted in English are seen as preparing students for working internationally. (“Opetusministeriö: Yliopistolakia ehkä muutettava” 2013)

Overall, Finnish youth have relatively good English skills. In a national evaluation about Finnish 9<sup>th</sup> graders’ English skills made in 1999 by the Finnish National Board of Education, the general level of proficiency in English was satisfactory, and 14% of the students managed English in an excellent way (Pihko 2007: 18). In 2002, 15-year-old Finnish students were among the best in a European comparison about English skills, alongside with the Norwegian and the Swedish (Pihko 2007: 18). However, there are clear differences between genders and areas. Girls have systematically better results than boys (Pihko 2007: 45), and in the national evaluation of the 9<sup>th</sup> graders in 2002 girls succeeded better than boys in all areas of English use although the differences were not very large (Tuokko 2003: 3). Students in the Southern Finland get better results than students in the North or East (Pihko 2007: 45). The differences between areas might be partly explained by problems in turnover and competency of teachers, but also by students’ lack of motivation and alienation from language teaching at school (Pihko 2007: 19).

## **2.4 Finnish students' attitudes to English and motivation to learn English**

In general, Finnish youth have positive attitudes about the English language which has been proved in various studies. In a large national study in 2002, reported by Tuokko (2003), the English language proved to be popular among Finnish 9<sup>th</sup> graders. 90% of the students reported liking English some amount or a lot, and 93% of them thought English was quite important or very important. (Tuokko 2003: 3) Pihko (2007) compiled a questionnaire study, and recruited 181 Finnish students of 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grades as respondents. The majority of the students had positive attitudes about studying English: 64% of them agreed to some extent or completely with the statement "I think studying English at school is nice", whereas 10% did not have a clear opinion. However, there was also a significant number of students (26%) who disagreed with this statement to some extent or completely. (Pihko 2007: 56-88) The positive attitudes of Finnish youth can be due to the strong presence of English in Finland and especially its dominant position in youth culture (Pihko 2007: 45). Students are probably at least partly motivated to learn English because they have contact with the English language in their everyday life.

However, teachers still think that the students' - especially the boys' - motivation to study English is a problem. English is a popular language, but some students, especially boys, are not interested in learning it at school. (Pihko 2007: 45) Pihko's (2007) study of 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> graders also showed that, more than girls, boys have more problems with attitudes and motivation towards learning English. This gender difference is in accordance with previous Finnish studies about motivation to learn languages at school. (Pihko 2007: 56-88) The problem that the school has is how to make the students' motivation last after the enthusiasm of the first years of language learning. It is especially difficult for young students to get interested in learning languages if they do not see immediate use for the language in their own surroundings. (Pihko 2007: 44) As discussed earlier, Finnish students generally have various contacts with the English language in their everyday life which probably affects positively their attitudes towards English. However, having a positive attitude towards the language does not necessarily mean having a positive attitude towards learning it at school.

In Jalkanen and Ruuska's (2007) study, the focus was on Finnish 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> graders' attitudes to learning English, and, in particular, on their feelings on English lessons. This case study concentrated on affective factors influencing English learning. The results showed that 34% of the students liked English lessons, 43% didn't like English lessons, and 23% had both positive and negative comments about English lessons. The reasons for liking English lessons were mainly due to the perceived usefulness of learning English, nice exercises and activities, a liking for learning either English or learning in general, and the teacher. The reasons for not liking English lessons included, for instance, the teacher, exams, the difficulty of English, fast-tempo lessons, boredom, and the lack of peace in the class room. In a study by Muhonen (2004) Finnish 9<sup>th</sup> graders' most important reasons for demotivation were the teacher (58.6 %) and the learning material (19.8 %). However, the learner's attitude towards the English language, for instance not finding English interesting or useful, was reported only by 2.7% pupils as a source for demotivation. (Muhonen 2004: 70-72) In Pihko's (2007: 125-126) study the students were asked about ways to improve teaching English. Two most common themes were having more practice in speaking and using more diverse methods at school: for instance taking more advantage of computers and Internet. Using computers could be one way to get also boys more interested in studying languages since they use them generally on their free time as well. Jalkanen and Ruuska (2007) asked some 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> graders about the connection between English outside the school and learning English at school, but they did not feel that they had a connection in a way that English would be easier to learn at school if used outside the school (Jalkanen and Ruuska 2007: 53-66). However, in the national evaluation (Tuokko 2003) only 2% of the 9<sup>th</sup> graders thought they had learned all of their English skills at school, whereas 17% of the students believed they had learned around 20% of their language skills through media (Tuokko 2003: 3). This is significant for this study since the assumption in this study is that the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> graders may already have acquired some knowledge of English through their free time activities.

### **3. FACTORS AFFECTING LANGUAGE LEARNING**

Various studies have previously concentrated on factors that affect language learning. These factors include attitudes towards a foreign language, and the influence of these attitudes on motivation to learn the language. Attitudes of the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> graders towards English are the main focus in this study, and thus attitudes will be concentrated on as one important factor affecting language learning. The social context of language learning contributes to attitudes towards foreign language, its speakers and the learning situation. These attitudes are one of the factors that influence motivation to learn a foreign language. Besides attitudes, learner motivation is formed by other personal characteristics, such as personality and learning capabilities. All of these together explain the use the learner makes of the available formal and informal learning opportunities, and the interplay between the learner and the situation determines the learning outcomes. (Spolsky 1992: 28) Attitudes and motivation are also called affective factors in language learning. Other affective factors are, for instance, linguistic self-confidence and self-image related to language learning. Affective factors influence language learning and the communicative activity of learners: how willing learners are to use their language abilities. Thus affective factors have a significant influence as it comes to learning languages. (Pihko 2007: 23-24)

#### **3.1 Attitudes to language**

In everyday speech, the terms opinion and attitude tend to be used synonymously. However, in the academic context, there are important differences between these terms. Baker (1992) defines opinion as an overt belief that does not contain an affective reaction and can be verbalized. On the other hand, attitudes contain affective reactions and they may be latent, conveyed by both non-verbal and verbal processes. Opinion surveys and attitude surveys are also different. Opinion surveys are used to find out about community or group preferences and wishes, whereas attitude surveys focus on the relationship of attitudes to a variety of other variables, aiming to understand human functioning. (Baker 1992: 14)

Attitude as a term is commonly used in everyday discussion and it offers thus correspondence between scientific and everyday language (Baker 1992: 9). Attitude is a

construct used to explain the direction and persistence of human behaviour, and as a way to explain consistent patterns in behaviour. Attitudes cannot be directly observed but they can be inferred from the direction and persistence of external behaviour. They may often manage to summarize, explain and predict behaviour. (Baker 1992: 10-11) However, attitudes do not necessarily translate into observable behaviour or performance (Bartram 2010: 34). An attitude is an evaluative orientation to a social object, for example a language. An attitude can be seen to have some kind of stability that allows it to be identified. (Garrett 2010: 20) Some attitudes are more superficial and unstable, while others are more durable. It is suggested that attitudes acquired early in life tend to be more enduring. (Garrett 2010: 29) This suggests that the attitudes of the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> graders towards English may be significant for their later English studies. Attitudes are learned through a variety of means, two important sources of attitudes being personal experiences and social environment, including the media (Garrett 2010: 22). Contexts such as the language background, the type of youth culture experienced, and the type of school attended affect attitudes in addition to individual attributes (Baker 1992: 20).

Attitudes are often considered to consist of cognitive, affective and behavioural components. The cognitive component concerns thoughts and beliefs. For instance, a favourable attitude to a certain language may contain a belief in the importance of that language. The affective component concerns feelings towards the attitude object, for instance the English language. The feelings may concern love or hate of the language, or an anxiety about learning the language. (Baker 1992: 12) The cognitive and affective components of attitude are not always in harmony. A person may express favourable attitudes but at the same time that same person may more covertly have negative feelings about the issue. Irrational prejudices, anxieties and fears may be in contradiction with formally stated beliefs. In attitude measurement, formal statements are made reflecting the cognitive component of attitudes. Consequently, deep-seated and private feelings, especially if they are different from preferred public statements, may not be truly revealed in attitude measurement. (Baker 1992: 12)

The behavioural component of attitudes concerns the predisposition to act in certain ways (Garrett 2010: 23). It is a behavioural intention or plan of action under defined contexts and circumstances. For instance, a person with a favourable attitude to English might state they would send their children to an English school or might indicate their

willingness to enter adult language classes. The behavioural component may often, but not always be an indicator of external behaviour, since the relationship between attitudes and action is neither straightforward nor simple. (Baker 1992: 13) A common-sense view suggests, however, a strong connection between attitudes and behaviour. At the same time, attitudes do not necessarily lead to certain behaviour. Situational variables or other attitudes may cause a person to act in a different way than a certain attitude would suggest. For instance, a positive attitude to a certain language may not lead to learning it due to the fact that learning it would require a long-term commitment. (Garrett 2010: 24-29)

As far as children's attitudes are concerned, they tend to be influenced by their parents' attitudes (Baker 1992: 109). It is generally believed that parents have the most significant influence on the development of their children's attitudes, such as attitudes towards foreign languages. Parents may influence language attitudes in various ways, such as through discussion, by encouraging their child to use the language, or by helping with the homework. They may also affect the language attitudes negatively, for instance, by stating their belief that learning foreign languages is not important. (Bartram 2010: 66) The possible effect of the parents' attitudes on their children's attitudes is one focus point in this study of the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> graders, and the assumption is that some connection between the parents' and the children's attitudes can be found. However, as Baker (1992) points out, although children's attitudes tend to be similar to their parents, this does not mean that one causes the other. The similarity of attitudes may be caused by other factors, such as other relations, neighbours, friends and school, and, in addition, similarities in terms of community, economic conditions, and cultural experiences. It is also possible that some children grow up with opposite views to their parents, which could also be seen as an example of the effect of parental influence. For instance, parents whose opinions are strongly against a language may provoke a pro-language reaction in their children. However, it is more common that parents and their children have similar language attitudes. (Baker 1992: 109)

When learning a foreign language at school, the teacher tends to influence language attitudes significantly. Language learning requires the students to perform 'foreign' behavioural practices in the class room. If they do not feel like they can trust their language teacher, they are likely to have a negative attitude towards the learning situation. Thus the influence of the teacher on the students' attitudes may be more

significant when learning languages than when learning other subjects. (Bartram 2010: 43-44) The relationship between attitudes and successful learning is generally acknowledged, although some researchers have not found evidence for this relationship in their studies (Bartram 2010: 33). A positive attitude to language learning may be a significant factor in language achievement. In this sense, an attitude is a predisposing factor. An attitude can also be an outcome in itself, since learning a language may influence the formation of a favourable attitude towards the language that has been learnt. A positive attitude may be as important an outcome as language achievement when considering further development or interest in a subject. Thus attitude serves a double function as a predisposer and an outcome. (Baker 1992: 12)

### **3.1.1 Instrumental and integrative attitudes**

Attitudes towards language learning are generally divided into two categories, instrumental and integrative attitudes, based on the reasons why an individual considers the language significant. An instrumental attitude to a language reflects pragmatic and utilitarian motives. The benefit of knowing a foreign language is seen as the possibility to gain social recognition or economic advantages. Studying languages could be useful in getting a good job, for instance. Other instrumental attitudes to learning a language might include status, achievement, personal success, self enhancement, self-actualisation or basic security and survival. An instrumental attitude to a language is mostly self-oriented and individualistic. (Baker 1992: 31–32) Instrumental orientation is not rooted in the personality of the learner which might make it less effective and more dependent on external pressures (Skehan 1989: 53).

On the other hand, an integrative attitude to a language is more social and interpersonal. It is connected with the need for affiliation and the desire to be like members of the other language community. (Baker 1992: 32) An individual with an integrative orientation is learning a language in order to learn about, interact with, or become closer to, the language community. It reflects an interest in forming a closer liaison with the other language community. (Gardner 1985: 54) The concept of integrativeness refers to an openness to identify, at least in part, with another language community (Masgoret and Gardner 2003: 126). An integrative attitude also means openness to different groups and multicultural attitude in general. Learning a foreign language may be seen as

important because it will allow getting to know more people and to have conversations with them. (Baker 1992: 32) Learning a language requires also adopting parts of another culture: word sounds, pronunciations, and other behavioural and cognitive features. A person with an integrative attitude has a general openness toward the foreign language and its properties which facilitates the motivation to learn the language. (Masgoret and Gardner 2003: 126) Integrative orientation is based in the personality of the learner which makes it a particularly important source of motivation. It is likely to last for a long time and provide motivation for learning. (Skehan 1989: 53)

Attitudes in general, and integrative and instrumental attitudes in particular, have influence on research about language acquisition and achievement. Attitude or motivation to learn a language is an important factor in successful learning, besides the aptitude for languages. In Gardner and Lambert's original study in 1959, attitude or motivation to learn a language was found to be independent of language aptitude. Also students with lower language learning ability may have favourable attitudes, and having higher ability does not guarantee succeeding in learning a language. If a student has favourable attitudes towards speakers of the language and is interested to get to know them better, they are more likely to work harder to learn the language. Thus integratively oriented students may generally be more successful in language learning than instrumentally oriented students. (Baker 1992: 33)

Orientation refers to the reasons why an individual has a certain goal, such as learning a language. Students may be integratively or instrumentally oriented. (Gardner 1985: 11). As stated in the previous chapter, an integrative orientation may generally prove more successful in language learning. However, having an integrative orientation does not guarantee having motivation to learn the language since orientations do not necessarily reflect motivation. Integratively oriented individuals may tend to be more highly motivated than individuals with other orientations, but this does not concern all individuals. (Gardner 1985: 54) A person with an integrative orientation may not be motivated to learn the language, and a person with an instrumental orientation may or may not be motivated. Thus a person with an instrumental orientation may be more motivated than a person with an integrative orientation, and vice versa. (Masgoret and Gardner 2003: 129) As a consequence, the distinction between orientation and motivation should be kept clear (Gardner 1985: 54). Integrative orientation, instrumental orientation, attitudes toward the learning situation and motivation are all

positively related to language learning but motivation has the most significant role in language achievement (Masgoret and Gardner 2003: 158). It has been proposed that integrativeness might be more relevant for students who are learning a second language than for ones who are learning a foreign language (Masgoret and Gardner 2003: 135). However, integrativeness plays a role also in foreign language learning (Masgoret and Gardner 2003: 158).

Moreover, integrative and instrumental orientations are not necessarily opposites or alternatives. An individual may have both instrumental and integrative attitudes at the same time, and the importance of them for the individual may vary during time. People from different contexts may also interpret the same item in different ways. For instance, travelling abroad could represent an integrative attitude for some people, and an instrumental attitude for other people. (Baker 1992: 34–35) Integrative and instrumental attitudes play a significant role especially in second language achievement when concentrating on the attitudes between different language groups can be considered essential. However, the motivation to learn foreign languages can also consist of other factors than integrative or instrumental factors. For instance, the factors resulting in motivation could include having an intellectual challenge, personal achievement, showing off for friends or feeling more sophisticated by knowing a rare language. (Pihko 2007: 30-31)

### **3.1.2 The measurement of attitudes**

There are various factors that need to be taken into account while measuring attitudes. As Maio and Haddock (2009) point out, attitudes are not directly observable and can only be inferred from the responses of an individual. Consequently, various methodologies have been developed in order to effectively assess attitudes. These methodologies can be divided into explicit and implicit measurements. In explicit attitude measurement, the respondents are asked directly about their attitudes, whereas in implicit attitude measurement attitudes are assessed indirectly without direct questions. Attitudes are usually measured explicitly, commonly by using self-report questionnaires. (Maio and Haddock 2009: 11) Baker (1992) states that underlying attitudes can be shown by observation of behaviour or, more efficiently, by self-reports. Both observation and self-reports can validly – although sometimes also invalidly –

indicate also latent attitudes. The measurement of attitudes may also be more useful in predicting future behaviour than observation of current behaviour. Attitudes tend to be less affected by situational factors, and they can be measured more reliably. (Baker 1992: 16) However, the measurement of an individual's attitudes is rarely, if ever, likely to reveal their attitudes perfectly for various reasons. People may respond to an attitude test in a way that makes them appear more prestigious, better than they are in reality. People tend to give socially desirable answers both consciously and unconsciously. People may also be affected in their responses due to the researcher and the perceived purpose of the research, and the context or environment of the testing may also affect replies. (Baker 1992: 18–19)

A key element in attitude measurement is the generality or specificity of the attitude in question. Attitude to foreign languages, attitude to English language, and attitude to speaking English with foreigners all represent three levels of generality. Defined acts also vary in their generality, for instance speaking English in general, or speaking English with family friends. Attitude measurement has more predictive value when the level of generality is the same. (Baker 1992: 16) When measuring attitudes, bi-directional links between variables should also be considered. For instance, attitudes may both affect, and be affected by, language abilities. A favourable attitude to a language may facilitate learning, and success at learning a language may improve the attitude to the language in question. (Baker 1992: 26-27)

One of the most popular methods of attitude measurement is to produce an attitude scale composed of statements (Baker 1992: 17). Kind and Barmby (2011: 117-118) discuss the criticism towards using attitude scales to measure attitudes. Attitude scales are claimed to lack credibility for various reasons. One claim is that since the attitude statements are made by researchers, the questionnaires provide information about how the researchers' attitudes are rated, instead of actual attitudes held by the subjects of the study. Moreover, attitudes are claimed to be too complicated to be revealed in Likert-based questionnaires. Kind and Barmby (2011: 118) conclude that attitude scales are not useful for all studies but defend their use for various reasons. In their opinion, attitude scales are useful since they produce comparable results when being used repeatedly. Thus they provide a simple but effective means of finding out if attitudes have changed over time.

### 3.2 Motivation to learn a language

Attitudes are the main focus in this study. However, attitudes and motivation to learn English are closely connected. Attitudes affect motivation, and having motivation to learn English is significant for successful learning. Both attitudes and motivation refer to latent dispositions that have an effect on the behaviour, but not to external behaviour itself. The difference between attitudes and motivation is that attitudes are object specific, whereas motives are goal specific. (Baker 1992: 14) Motivation has to do with attitudes towards learning the language, the desire and the motivational intensity (Gardner 1985: 54). Motivation concerns the direction and extent of human behaviour: why an individual decides to do something, and how long and how hard they are going to pursue it (Dörnyei and Ushioda 2011: 4).

Motivation is a significant factor in order to start studying and obtaining learning results. Motivation may influence learning results even more than talents. (Kangasvieri et al. 2011: 31) The basic source to motivation is a general and natural willingness to learn. The motivation to learn languages can come from an interest in language itself, or a desire to identify oneself with peers who are also learning the language. The latter motivation factor is especially significant with young children. (Kangasvieri et al. 2011: 30) If there are many positive factors increasing the motivation, a student is willing to put more effort into learning. In this case, negative factors have less influence. If the motivation is low, studying is performed in a routine-like way without personal motivation. The comprehensive school has a significant role in forming attitudes and views about learning. (Kangasvieri et al. 2011: 30)

There are four central factors influencing the motivation to learn a foreign language. Social environment influences by beliefs about the language and its users. These beliefs come across to students either by people near them, such as parents, teachers and friends, or they may be beliefs and attitudes that are general in the society. Individual factors have to do with personal characteristics such as intelligence or learning difficulties. Factors concerning learning situations contain experiences about teaching at school, for instance. The fourth factor has to do with the student's confidence in being able to obtain good skills of the language. (Kangasvieri et al. 2011: 31) The most common motives for young Finnish people to study foreign languages are instrumental: students believe they will need language skills abroad, in working life and otherwise in the future. Especially boys are motivated by the usefulness of a language, whereas girls

are often also motivated by affective factors such as an interesting or a beautiful language. Young people estimate language skills to be one of the most important skills in life, and English is the most valued language among them. (Kangasvieri et al. 2011: 36) Gender differences in English skills have decreased in recent years. This may prove that English is not seen as a foreign language in a similar way than other languages such as German or Russian. English is a part of everyday life and it is widely used in contexts where its use is seen as meaningful and relevant. This makes it a practical means of communication also for boys. For boys, instrumental reasons, the usage of a language in life, are usually more important than integrative reasons, such as interest in languages in general. (Sajavaara 2006: 242)

There are many factors that may influence the motivation negatively: weak self-confidence, negative attitudes towards the language or its speakers, the obligatoriness of studying, the disruptive influence of another language, attitudes among the group, the textbook, the teacher and inadequate space for learning; low appreciation of languages at school, language is not much needed, having not enough language studies, or uncertainty to obtain personal goals in learning (Kangasvieri et al. 2011: 31). If peer group has a negative attitude about language studies, children's attitudes may become negative or they may act like they do not like languages due to peer pressure (Kangasvieri et al. 2011: 37-41).

Parents have a significant influence on their children's motivation to learn languages, especially with younger children. Family and parental attitudes towards foreign languages may be crucial in strengthening children's positive thinking towards foreign languages. (Griva and Chouvarda 2012: 2) The importance, usefulness and status of a language come across from parents to their child and influence their language attitudes. Their attitudes and experiences are reflected in their child's learning motivation and interest in languages. (Kangasvieri et al. 2011: 37-42) On a practical level, parents may influence what languages their child studies. Often schools do not offer other option than English for the first foreign language but a study in 2010 showed that 80% of parents would prefer English as the first foreign language for their child even if there were other options. Most parents want their child to learn a language that they believe to be useful and that is widely used. Parents' language studies have also an influence on their children's motivation to learn languages, since parents may prefer their child to learn a language they know themselves in order to help with homework. (Kangasvieri et

al. 2011: 37-42) Parental involvement in foreign language learning, encouraging children to learn by answering questions and helping, has an importance in order for children to achieve a successful learning outcome (Griva and Chouvarda 2012: 11). Parents' positive and encouraging attitude makes children appreciate language studies. Parents influence especially children's views about the usefulness of a language. (Kangasvieri et al. 2011: 37-42) As stated before, the perceived usefulness of English is one of the significant factors for having motivation to learn English, and thus the influence of the parents may be crucial for motivation. In a study by Bartram (2006), the great majority of students who perceived parents to be a positive influence, did so as a result of the utilitarian value of language learning that their parents had communicated to them. For instance, recognizing how useful English is for their parents in business or travelling, reinforces the students' views about the usefulness of English. Besides supportive learning behaviours, there are less supportive practices such as the communication of negative attitudes about the language communities. (Bartram 2006)

Parental influence on language learning may be significant but it is connected with other factors such as educational, social and individual variables (Bartram 2006). The role of motivation in language learning is influenced by the particular cultural context, such as the beliefs in the community concerning the importance and meaningfulness of learning the language. It is argued that if the general belief in the community is that learning a language is very difficult, the general level of achievement will be low, and individual differences in achievement will be related to individual differences in intelligence, aptitude, motivation and anxiety. On the other hand, if it is generally expected that most individuals will learn a language, the general level of achievement will be high, and individual difference will be more highly related to intelligence and aptitude than to the other variables. Thus the generally shared cultural beliefs will not only influence the general level of language proficiency in the community but also significantly the factors influencing individual differences in achievement. (Gardner 1985: 146-147)

As it comes to learning English, the expanding role of the English language in the globalized world may also be an important source of motivation. The global role of the English language as the common language, *lingua franca*, gives a motive also for learning it. (Edmondson and House 2003: 331) Having in mind the various contexts where Finnish students encounter English in their everyday lives, this seems probable also in Finland. Edmondson and House (2003: 334) look at motivation through a

widening circle. The first circle consists of initial excitement that takes place in the learning situation, for instance due to games and fun English lessons during the first years of learning. The second circle consists of life style outside the classroom, using English for instance at hobbies, with friends or through media. The last circle includes the recognition of the role of English as a major world language, and the usefulness of learning it for the future and employment. Edmondson and House claim that in order to have a long-term learning motivation, the last circle is the most effective.

## **4. RESEARCH TASK AND METHODS**

### **4.1 Research questions**

The aim of the study is to investigate the attitudes of 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> graders towards English language. The main aim of the study is to see the type of attitudes children have on both grades, and if their attitudes have changed after they have learned English formally at school for approximately one school year. The students' free time activities concerning English language, and the possible connection between their free time activities and attitudes are considered as well. Moreover, their parents' attitudes toward English language are studied to see if there are clear connections between parents' attitudes and the attitudes of the students.

Hence, the research questions of this study are the following:

1. What are the attitudes of the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> graders towards the English language?
  - 1.1 Have these attitudes changed after they have studied English at school for one school year compared to the situation before learning English at school?
2. How Finnish 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> graders are in contact with the English language in their free time?
  - 2.1 Has their use of English in their free time changed after they have studied English at school for one school year?
  - 2.2 Is there any connection to be found between the students' use of English in their free time and their attitudes towards English?
3. What are the attitudes of the parents towards the English language?
  - 3.1 Is there any connection to be found between the attitudes of the parents and the attitudes of their child?

The aim of the study is to increase the knowledge of the attitudes of children towards English at the crucial age when they are starting to learn it formally at school. The attitudes of the parents are studied since the children are most likely affected by their attitudes at this age. Free time activities might be closely connected with English attitudes, and they provide interesting knowledge also by themselves: how do the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> graders spend their free time, especially as it comes to the media.

## **4.2 Methodology**

Since the research was done with young students, some issues that should be taken into account when doing research with children are discussed here, before moving on to discussing the methodology of this research in more detail. Children think and understand the world around them in a different way than adults. When doing research with children, these differences should be considered, and appropriate means of explaining and assessing should be found. A child's learning, understanding and thinking is also influenced by social relationships, environmental conditions and cultural conventions. (Greig and Taylor 1999: 31) The microsystem is a term used for the immediate setting of a child that naturally has a strong influence in a child's life. It contains for instance the home, parents, teachers, peers and interaction with them. (Greig and Taylor 1999: 32)

When asked a question, children may reply in an unpredictable way. They may answer in a way that is usual for adults, and considered by adults as answering "correctly", but they may also give an inventive or a comic answer that has no logical relation to the question. (Greig and Taylor 1999: 64) Children's responses depend on their developmental capacities, including their ability to understand the questions of the research and the reason for asking those questions (Greig and Taylor 1999: 78). Children's memory capacity is not comparable to adults until the end of the primary school years. Their memory can also be affected by factors such as the circumstances around the issue that is being researched, or emotions that are associated with it. Thus they often need support in remembering. (Greig and Taylor 1999: 78) Children's responses may also be influenced by the place where the data collection is carried out. At school, children are likely to be influenced by their class mates. Moreover, they may see the research task as a test with right or wrong answers, and affecting their formal

assessment, which may also mean that they are more reluctant to speak up or be critical in any way. (Pinter 2011: 211-212)

When designing questions for children, all of the issues above should be considered, in order to get useful answers for the research. Children's reports are more likely to be valid when age-related language is used. School-aged children gradually understand and produce more complex sentences. (Greig and Taylor 1999: 81) The phrasing of the questions needs to be considered carefully and the use of complicated concepts should be avoided (Pinter 2011: 148). The amount of thinking and writing that has to be done needs to be considered as well: writing may be tiring and time-consuming for children who are still inexperienced writers (Pinter 2011: 148). Drawings are often used in researching children, since they are believed to reveal children's inner mind. However, it is easy for the researcher to make false interpretations about the drawings. They should be correlated with other sources of information and studied in an open and exploratory manner. (Greig and Taylor 1999: 79)

This research was conducted as a questionnaire study. A questionnaire was chosen as the method for this study for various reasons. Firstly, as stated before, self-reports are an efficient way to study attitudes. Secondly, the use of a questionnaire enabled collecting data from various students. Thirdly, filling out questionnaires at home with parents was considered as a less stressful option for young students. It was assumed that this would enable the students to provide possible negative attitudes more freely, without the fear of displeasing the researcher or the teacher. As stated before, children tend to answer questions differently according to the place where the research data is collected, and they are more likely to see the questionnaire as a test if it is filled out at school.

The study is a case study since it includes only 15 students and the results cannot be generalized. The aim of the research is to describe these students and document their attitudes towards English and how they are in contact with the language. The study aims to explain if there seem to be any cause-effect relationships between free time activities and attitudes, or parental attitudes and students' attitudes. Although the results cannot be generalized, the study aims to predict on its own part how the presence of English in Finland and students' various English contacts influence their attitudes towards learning it, and how the attitudes towards English tend to change after starting to learn it at

school. The study has also a comparative factor since same students were studied both on the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> grade and their answers are thus comparable between grades.

The data for this study was provided by questionnaires. Questions included both multiple choice questions and open-ended questions. Thus the data has both quantitative and qualitative elements. Quantitative research and qualitative research are approaches that in practice are difficult to separate from each other precisely. They complement each other since numbers and meanings are dependent on each other. Numbers are based on conceptualization that includes meanings, and conceptual phenomena that include meaning can be expressed in numbers. Measurement includes on all levels both qualitative and quantitative side. (Hirsjärvi, Remes and Sajavaara 2009: 136-137) Accordingly, the analysis of the results of this study includes both qualitative and quantitative elements.

This study was a survey-research in which the data is collected in standardized form from a group of people. A survey-research includes a sample of individuals from a certain group of people and with the collected data the aim is to describe, compare and explain phenomena. (Hirsjärvi et al. 2009: 134) The obvious benefit of using questionnaires in a research is the possibility to include many respondents in a convenient way. However, there are also disadvantages in using questionnaires. One of them is the impossibility to know how seriously the questionnaire has been taken, for instance whether or not the respondents have answered the questions carefully and honestly. There may also have been misunderstandings about the questions that have influenced the answers. One significant problem with questionnaires is that usually a low percentage of them will be filled out and returned. (Hirsjärvi et al. 2009: 195)

#### **4.2.1 Design of the questionnaire**

The principle of the questionnaire was to use different types of questions, in order to get varied answers and more complex picture of the issue. The first questionnaire started with background questions about the students and their parents. This works as a warm-up for the actual questions. This was seen as the best way to organize the questionnaire, especially since young children may not be used to filling out questionnaires. After that followed easier questions about free time activities and attitudes towards English which could be answered by simply choosing a valid option. The questionnaire was tested

beforehand by an 8-year-old student, and multiple choice questions were considered to be more pleasant by the child than questions with open answers. This was one of the reasons why multiple choice questions were selected to be used in this study; answering them is easier and faster for respondents. Another benefit of multiple choice questions is that the answers can be compared meaningfully. However, multiple choice questions produce less diverse answers. (Hirsjärvi et al. 2009: 201) At the end of the questionnaire there were questions about the attitudes towards English with open answers that required more thinking and answering with own words. The benefits of using open-ended questions are that the respondents can answer them with their own words. Open-ended questions do not suggest answers and thus the answers show what the respondents already know about the subject. This shows what is essential or important in the thoughts of the respondents, the intensity of their feelings about the subject, and moreover, it gives the possibility to recognize issues about motivation. (Hirsjärvi et al. 2009: 201) The questionnaire ended with instructions and a place for a drawing which seemed reasonable since at the end of the questionnaire the children were probably more tired of thinking and drawing is generally seen as more fun for them. The questionnaire was written in Finnish, and all answers were provided in Finnish as well, except for some words and phrases that the students had chosen to write in English for open-ended questions.

The questionnaires for the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> graders (See Appendix 1 and 2) were as similar as possible. Only two questions were modified for the questionnaire for the 3<sup>rd</sup> graders to take into account that they were already studying English whereas on the 2<sup>nd</sup> grade these questions had been about expectations to study English. The use of similar questionnaires ensured that the results were comparable with each other. This comparative aspect was meant to show if the 3<sup>rd</sup> graders were in contact with the English language significantly more often and in different ways than when they had been on the 2<sup>nd</sup> grade, and if their attitudes had changed after starting to learn English at school. The presupposition was that there would be at least some difference between these two groups.

A general rule for the maximum length of a questionnaire for primary school children is two pages. In this study, the questionnaire was five pages long on the 2<sup>nd</sup> grade and three pages long on the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade. However, the length of the questionnaire was estimated to be reasonable. On the 2<sup>nd</sup> grade two pages consisted of background

questions that were meant to be answered by the parents. Thus the actual questionnaire for children was three pages both on the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> grade. One page consisted of checking valid options from a list and half of the last page was reserved for the drawing. Thus there were approximately 1.5 pages of open questions. Also the help of the parents while filling out the questionnaire was taken into account. (Valli 2010: 104-106) A general rule is that the questionnaire should not take more than 20 minutes to fill out (Valli 2010: 108). The questionnaire was tested beforehand by an 8-year-old 2<sup>nd</sup> grader and her parent, who filled out the questionnaire together at home. They reported having used 27 minutes to fill the questionnaire out which was slightly but not significantly more than the general rule.

#### **4.2.2 Methods of analysis**

The results were analysed both by looking at the answers of the group of 15 students as a whole and comparing the general differences between the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> grade, and by comparing answers of individual students between the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> grade. At first, summaries were made about the background of the students and their parents' education, use and attitudes towards English. The questions about children's use of English and attitudes towards it were analysed one question at a time, including the answers by both the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> graders, in order to compare the results between the grades and to report the differences, if there were any. Connection between the students' use of English on their free time and their attitudes to English was analysed through the connection between students' reports about their free time activities connected with English and their answers to five questions about the importance of English, studying English and hearing or using English on their free time. The possible influence of the parents' attitudes on the children's attitudes was discussed through presenting examples of either significantly positive or negative parents or children. As the students in the study consist of 9 girls and 6 boys, both genders are relatively equally presented in the results. Thus the gender differences were also addressed to some extent in the analysis of the data, in order to see if there seemed to be any significant differences between genders, as it comes to the attitudes towards English. The last part of analysis consists of two students that were chosen as examples of either significantly positive or negative attitude, as based on the questions about their attitudes. All the answers of these two students will be reported and discussed.

### 4.3 Collection of data

The data was collected by a questionnaire that was submitted to the students on two different occasions. In May 2012 the questionnaire was delivered to all the 2<sup>nd</sup> grade students of a certain school in Central Finland (n= 53). The questionnaire was given to them by their teachers at school and the students took the questionnaire home with them so that they could fill them out with their parents. As 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> graders are not yet completely fluent in reading and writing, a long questionnaire would most likely have been challenging for them to fill out by themselves. Filling the questionnaires out at home also made it possible to get some background information about the parents and their attitudes towards English. At this stage, it was also assumed that not all of the students would fill the questionnaire out, and this also turned out to be the case. On the 2<sup>nd</sup> grade, 17 questionnaires were returned which was only 32% of the questionnaires sent out. In March 2013 the questionnaire was sent by mail to homes of these 17 students who had returned the questionnaire in the first phase. In this second phase that took place when the students were on the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade, 15 questionnaires were returned. These 15 students who returned the questionnaire both on the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> grade, are the ones taken into account in this study.

The questionnaire was filled out at home with the children and their parents, and the instructions were that a parent or both parents would fill the questionnaire out together with their child. The instructions were written as clearly as possible in order to avoid misunderstandings. The questionnaire was also tested beforehand by an 8-year-old 2<sup>nd</sup> grader and her parent to see if the instructions were clear enough. They filled out the questionnaire together at home, and some questions were slightly modified due to their answers and comments in order to make them clearer. The problem with a questionnaire being filled out at home is that there is no security as to who actually fills it out which should be taken into account. However, in this study it seems quite unlikely that any of the questionnaires would have been filled out by the parents without their child, especially since answering the questionnaire was voluntary. It should be taken into account, however, that the influence of parents on their children's answers may have varied between students. For instance, some parents may have offered more instructions or ideas for their children whereas others may have taken a more passive role in filling out the questionnaire.

Answering the questions at home may also have given more reliable results as it may have reduced the social desirability bias. People tend to give answers to questions in ways that they believe to be socially appropriate, reporting their attitudes to be the ones that they think they should have, rather than the ones they actually have. (Garrett 2010: 44) Anonymity and confidentiality reduce the risk of this bias, and questionnaires may have a smaller risk of this bias than interviews (Garrett 2010: 45). Thus it seems possible that filling the questionnaires out with the parents, rather than with the teacher or researcher, might have given more reliable results. Moreover, a positive factor in filling the questionnaire at home was that it enabled the respondents to answer the questions at a time that suited them best, for instance when they were not tired. They were also able to check their answers with no hurry and at their own pace. These factors may also contribute to the answers being more reliable. (Valli 2010: 107-108)

A significant problem with mailing the questionnaires at home is generally that a low percentage of them come back, which was an issue also with this research. Only 32% of the questionnaires were returned in the first phase on the 2<sup>nd</sup> grade. In the instructions of the first questionnaire the respondents were asked to commit to answering the questionnaire also in the second phase on the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade, although this could not be considered obligatory. However, it is possible that this long-term commitment may have reduced the percentage of returned questionnaires already in the first phase. In the second phase 88% of the mailed questionnaires were returned. However, the numbers were significantly smaller than in the first phase, and the previous commitment to the study probably increased the percentage of returned questionnaires.

## **5. RESULTS**

### **5.1 Background of the students**

The questions concerning the background information of the students were asked only in the questionnaire for the 2<sup>nd</sup> graders, and thus all of the following information is based on the situation on the 2<sup>nd</sup> grade. All the students have siblings. They are mostly the youngest child (8 students) or the oldest child (5 students) in their families, two of them being a middle child. They all speak Finnish as their mother tongue, and one of them speaks Dutch as his/her mother tongue besides Finnish. Other languages that the children speak include some English, reported by two students, and some Swedish reported by one student. All the families have an Internet connection, most of them have a TV (13 families) and 10 of them have a game console.

Only one of the students has never been abroad. The other students have travelled abroad more than five times (6 students), 3-5 times (5 students), or 1-2 times (3 students). None of them has lived abroad. Four students have attended English day care or an English club. Two students have had non-Finnish speaking children in their day care group or school class, and two students have had children that speak Finnish poorly. Six students have some relatives living abroad, although these relatives include some distant relatives such as second cousins and great aunts. However, if the family has included them in the questionnaire, they might be close to them. Six families have foreigners as family friends in Finland.

### **5.2 Background of the parents**

The background questions for the parents were asked on the questionnaire for the 2<sup>nd</sup> graders. These questions considered the parents' education and proficiency in languages, how long they had learned English, their use of English at work and on free time, and attitudes towards the importance of English language and using English personally. These questions were aimed at both parents of the child, if possible. In most cases, two parents had answered the background questions, but in the case of one student, only one parent had answered the questions and only the gender and mother tongue was reported about the other parent. Moreover, some parents did not answer all

the questions, and thus the number of the given answers changes slightly between the questions. However, all answers provided by the parents to each question are reported in the summaries. 20 parents reported on having a higher level education, and 8 having a secondary level education. Most of the parents speak Finnish as their mother tongue: 27 of them speak Finnish and one of them speaks both Finnish and Dutch. Two parents reported on having a different mother tongue, Swedish or Dutch. The parents were proficient in several languages. All the parents reported speaking English, 25 reported Swedish, 9 German, 4 French, 3 Russian and 3 Spanish.

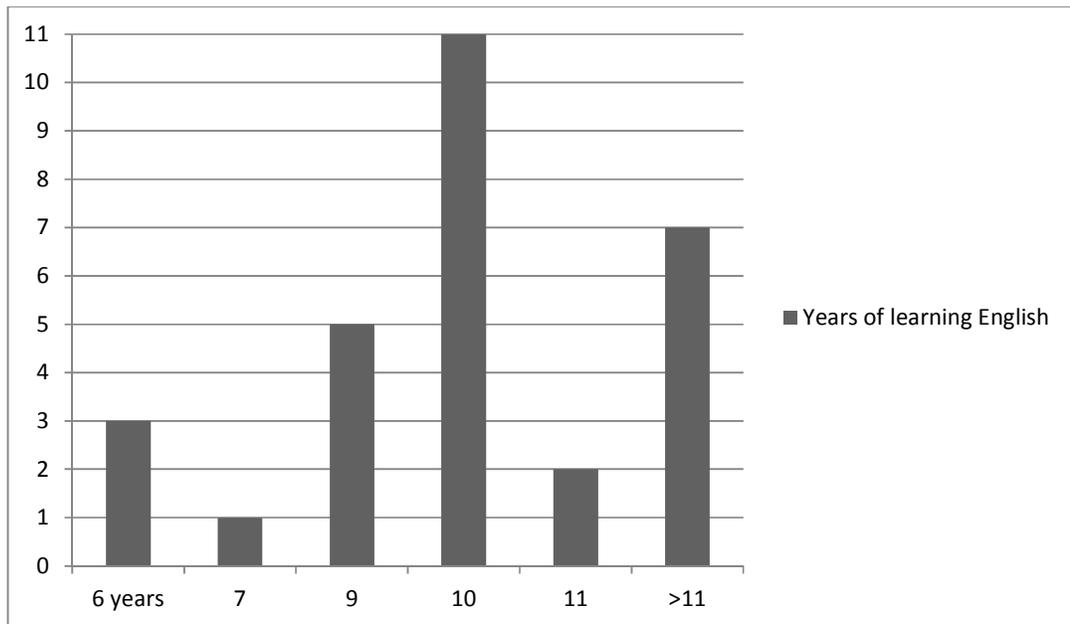


FIGURE 1. Number of years the parents have learned English

The parents are a generation that has studied a compulsory foreign language, English being the most common foreign language to be studied. This was shown also in the results. All the parents had learned English at least for 6 years, and 69% of them had learned it for 10 years or more.

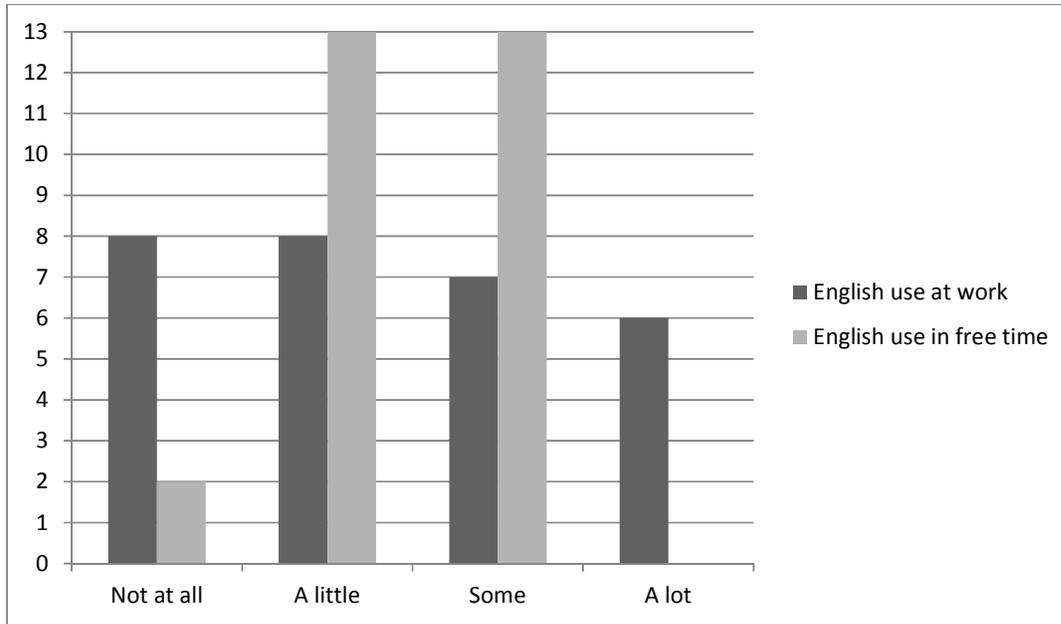


FIGURE 2. The parents' English use at work and in free time

There is a clear division between the parents, as it comes to using English at work. Roughly a quarter of the parents do not use English at all at work. The rest of them use English varying amounts, from a little usage to a lot. When it comes to using English in free time, the parents are more uniform. The majority of them use either a little or some English in their free time. Only two of them report not using English at all in free time and none of them reports using it a lot.

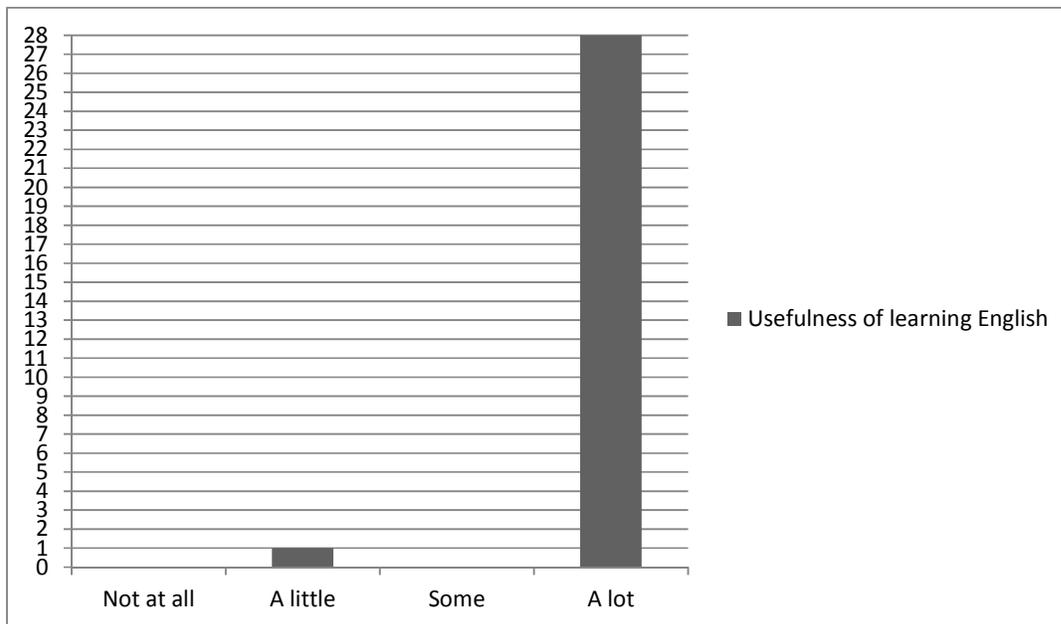


FIGURE 3. The parents' opinions about the usefulness of learning English

In general parents think that learning English is very useful. 28 of them think that learning English is useful ‘a lot’ whereas only of them says it is useful only ‘a little’. This is significant for this study since the opinion the parents have about the usefulness of learning English is likely to have some impact on their child’s opinion.

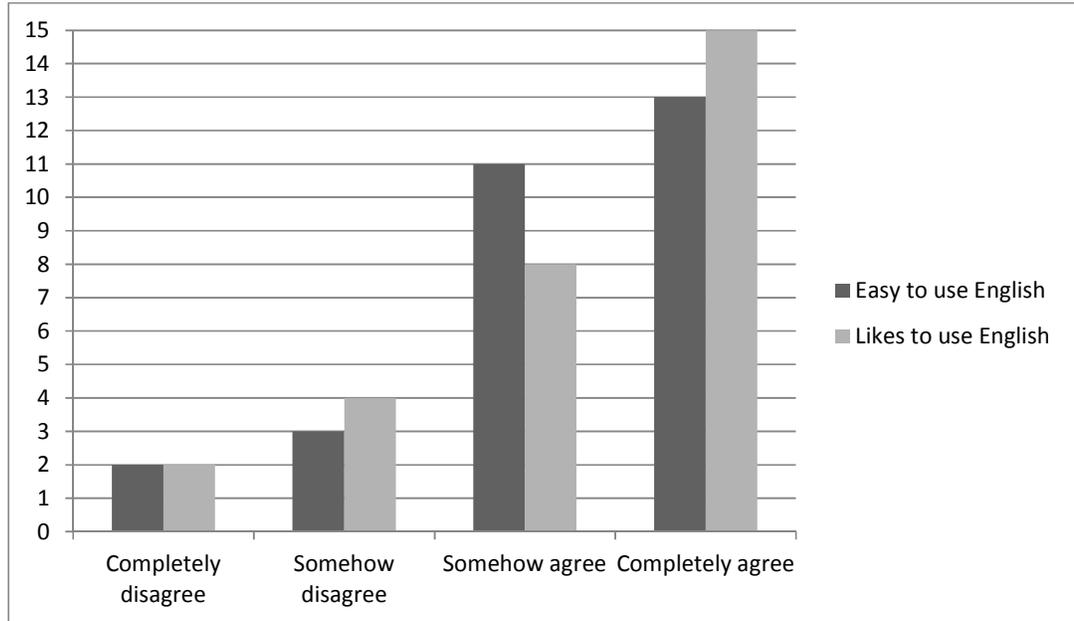


FIGURE 4. The parents’ attitudes towards their personal use of English

The majority of the parents agree somehow or completely with the statements that using English is easy for them and that they like to use English. Slightly more parents agree completely that they like to use English, than that using English is easy for them. Only six parents had disagreeing opinions about these statements. Two parents of one child both disagreed completely with both easiness to use English and liking to use it. Both parents of another child disagreed somehow with both statements. One parent of a certain child disagreed somehow with both statements, and one parent disagreed somehow to liking to use English although agreed somehow that using English was easy for him.

In summary, all parents have learned English for several years, and nearly all of them use it at least on their free time, if not also at work. The fact that they all know English means that they can provide help for their children for instance with homework, if needed. The parental support can be a significant factor for young children’s learning

success and motivation. The parents' personal preferences about English vary and not all of them like to use English. However, practically all of them see learning English as very useful. This is a significant issue for this study since, based on it, it can be assumed that the parents have a positive and supportive attitude towards their children's English studies. This may have also had an effect on the children's attitudes towards English.

### **5.3 The students' use of English**

The children's use of English was studied with two questions (Part 1 and 2). Part 1 provided children with 19 free time activities concerned with English. They chose the options that they were involved with on their free time. Part 2 was an open question asking if there were activities concerning English that the children were involved with, that were not included as options in Part 1.

**Part 1**

**Which of these activities do you practice on your free time?**

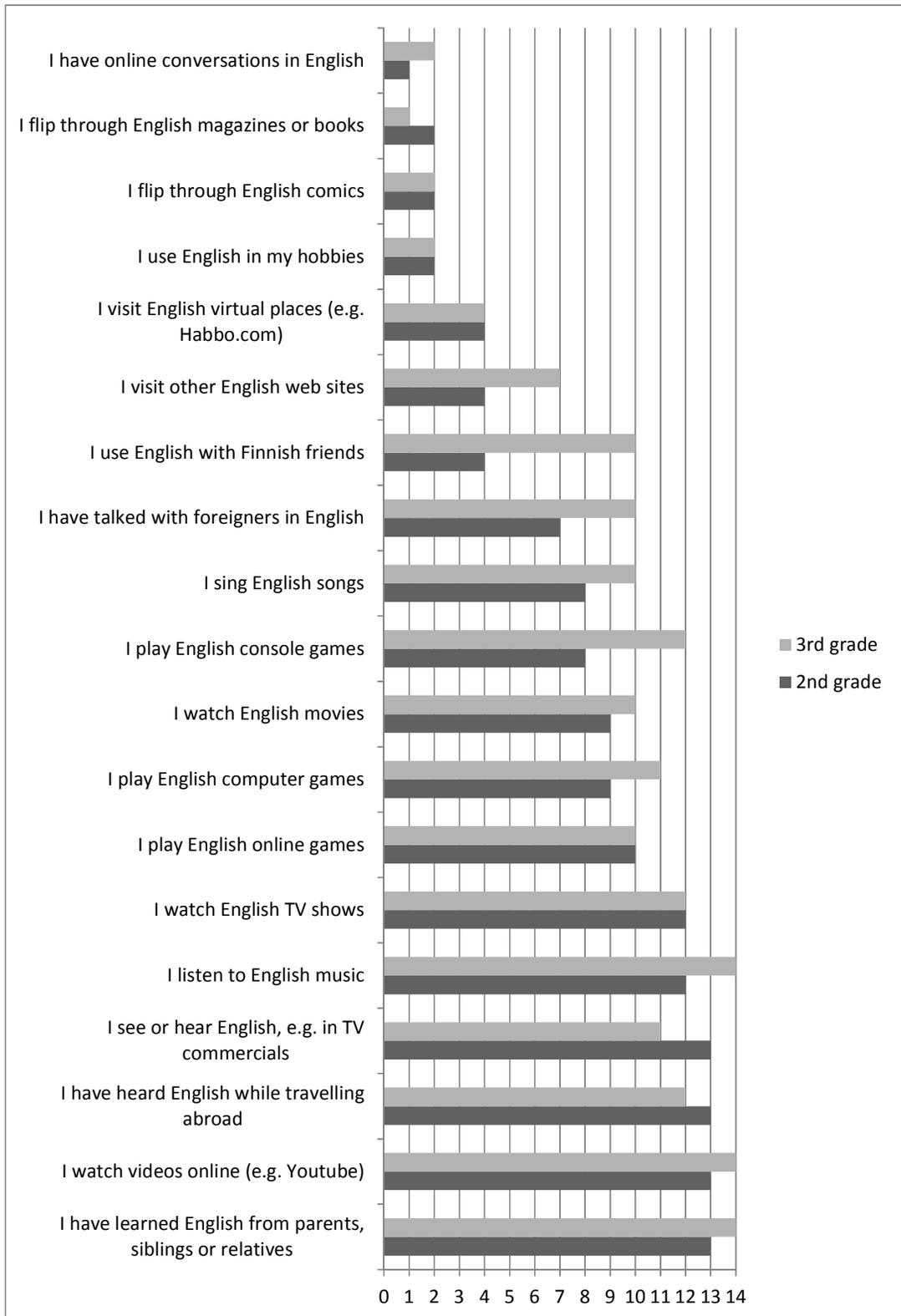


FIGURE 5. The children's free time activities concerning English

On the 2<sup>nd</sup> grade students' most common free time activities concerning the English language were learning English from family members or relatives, hearing English while travelling abroad, watching online videos, seeing or hearing English for instance in TV commercials, listening to music and watching TV shows. These activities were reported by 12 or 13 students. On the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade the most common free time activities were learning English from family members or relatives, watching online videos and listening to music. These were reported by 14 students. Other common practices reported by 12 students were hearing English while travelling abroad, watching TV shows and playing console games.

On the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade, the students were using English slightly more in general. In total, students chose 146 free time activities on the 2<sup>nd</sup> grade, compared to 168 chosen activities on the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade. This means an average of 9.7 activities per student on the 2<sup>nd</sup> grade and 11.2 activities per student on the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade. The most significant increases between grades have occurred with using English with Finnish friends increasing from 4 cases to 10 cases, playing console games in English which increased from 8 cases to 12, talking with foreigners increasing from 7 to 10, and visiting English web sites increasing from 4 to 7 cases.

The practice of some free time activities had also decreased as reported by students. Having heard English while travelling decreased from 13 cases to 12 cases, seeing or hearing English for instance in TV commercials decreased from 13 to 11, and flipping through English magazines and books decreased from 2 to 1. This shows also the lack of accuracy in the answers since all of the students who had heard English while travelling abroad on the 2<sup>nd</sup> grade, should have answered positively also on the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade since they were asked about all of their past experiences. Either the question was misinterpreted by the student to be about the past year, or the student thought differently about the level of hearing English on the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade: for instance it might be that the student thought s/he should have heard more English in order to answer positively than s/he had thought on the 2<sup>nd</sup> grade. The same explanation could be possible for the decrease in perceived English in commercials: it might be that on the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade some students felt they should hear or see more English in order to be able to answer positively.

Next to some of the questions the questionnaire provided a space for a more specific answer in case the student answered positively to the free time activity in question. The student was asked, for instance, which TV shows they watched or which games they played. There was a variety of answers to these questions. The most popular TV show was *Simpsons*, reported by three students on the 2<sup>nd</sup> grade and four students on the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade. Other TV shows were not mentioned more than one or two times. These included different series, game shows, reality shows, reality competitions, children's programmes, cartoons and nature programs. Comics that were mentioned were *Lucky Luke*, *Donald Duck*, *Pokémon* and *Uncle Scrooge*, however, all of them were mentioned only once.

There was a large variety of computer games mentioned, but none of them was mentioned several times, with the exception of *Minecraft* that was mentioned twice on the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade. None of the console games was mentioned more than one time. Examples of the games mentioned include sports games, adventure games and competitive music games. There were two more popular online games or game sites mentioned: *Club Penguin* was mentioned three times on the 2<sup>nd</sup> grade and two times on the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade, and *Miniclip.com* was mentioned three times on the 2<sup>nd</sup> grade and once on the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade. *Battlefield Heroes* was mentioned twice on the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade. Other answers included web sites with various games, virtual game worlds, a horse game and a site with dress up games. There was some overlap between different questions since *Club Penguin* was mentioned twice as a virtual place on the 2<sup>nd</sup> grade. It is a virtual world with games and activities, so it is not surprising that it was included both on the question about online games and about virtual places. *Moviestarplanet* was mentioned once on the 2<sup>nd</sup> grade and twice on the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade. It is a virtual place where one can play games in virtual chat rooms and make movies and cartoons with own virtual movie star. *Facebook* was also mentioned twice on the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade as a virtual world. As a web site to watch online videos, only *Youtube* was mentioned, 8 times on the 2<sup>nd</sup> grade and 9 times on the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade. One student mentioned 'English music' for the question about online videos. Other English web sites that students reported visiting included web sites offering translation or picture searches, and web sites concerned with certain hobbies. On the 2<sup>nd</sup> grade two students reported using English at their hobbies which was an English club. On the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade two students reported using English in their sports hobbies. Using English for online conversations was not common. However, on the 2<sup>nd</sup> grade it was reported by one student and on the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade by two students. On the 2<sup>nd</sup> grade one

student reported using English for conversations on *Moviestarplanet* although there was an explanation that only simple greetings such as “*My name is...*” and “*Hello*” were used. On the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade one student reported using English for conversations on *Panfu* and one student on *RuneScape*.

Generally, it seems that children have contact with English in their free time in various ways. Music, TV, Internet and games are popular among the students, and many of them have heard English while travelling abroad. The students had various contacts with English already on the 2<sup>nd</sup> grade, before starting to study it at school. Thus the presupposition of students having some attitudes towards English language already on the 2<sup>nd</sup> grade seems valid.

## **Part 2**

### **I have heard or used English in some other situation or place**

This question asked if the children had heard or used English in some other situation or place than the options provided in Question 1. On both the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> grade, six students answered this question providing possible other free time activities concerning English language. Some of them provided more than one option. Some situations provided by students are overlapping with the free time activities provided earlier but all answers are reported. On the 2<sup>nd</sup> grade students mentioned travelling three times, providing specific countries or places such as the ski slope. One student mentioned hearing or using English at school and one in the English club. One student heard or used English ‘almost every day with neighbours’, and another student heard or used English both at his/her relatives’ place and at home. On the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade three students mentioned travelling, all mentioning specific countries. One student heard or used English at his/her neighbour’s place and another one when his/her relatives were talking. One student mentioned hearing or using English at home. The only significant change between the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> grade is that hearing or seeing English at school was left out of the responses on the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade. This was probably seen as an obvious answer for all students on the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade.

## 5.4 The students' attitudes towards English

### Part 3

Part 3 consisted of five different questions about studying English language and hearing or using English language in free time. Two questions were slightly different for 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> graders. On the 2<sup>nd</sup> grade these two questions were about the expectations about studying English, whereas on the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade they were about the experiences of having studied English at school. The five questions were the following:

1. How important do you think it is to learn English?
2. How nice it is for you to start learning English next autumn? (2<sup>nd</sup> grade)  
How nice it is for you to learn English at school? (3<sup>rd</sup> grade)
3. How easy do you assume it to be to study English? (2<sup>nd</sup> grade)  
How easy for you it is to study English? (3<sup>rd</sup> grade)
4. How nice it is for you to hear English in your free time?
5. How nice do you think it would be to use English in your free time?

The answers will be looked at first from the perspective of how the students answered as a group on the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> grade, and what kinds of changes there were in their answers as a group between the grades. After this, the questions are analysed in relation to the individual respondents: how individual students changed their attitudes between the grades. This will show if there are students whose answers have changed only negatively or only positively, or if their answers have changed both positively and negatively.

### 1. How important do you think it is to learn English?

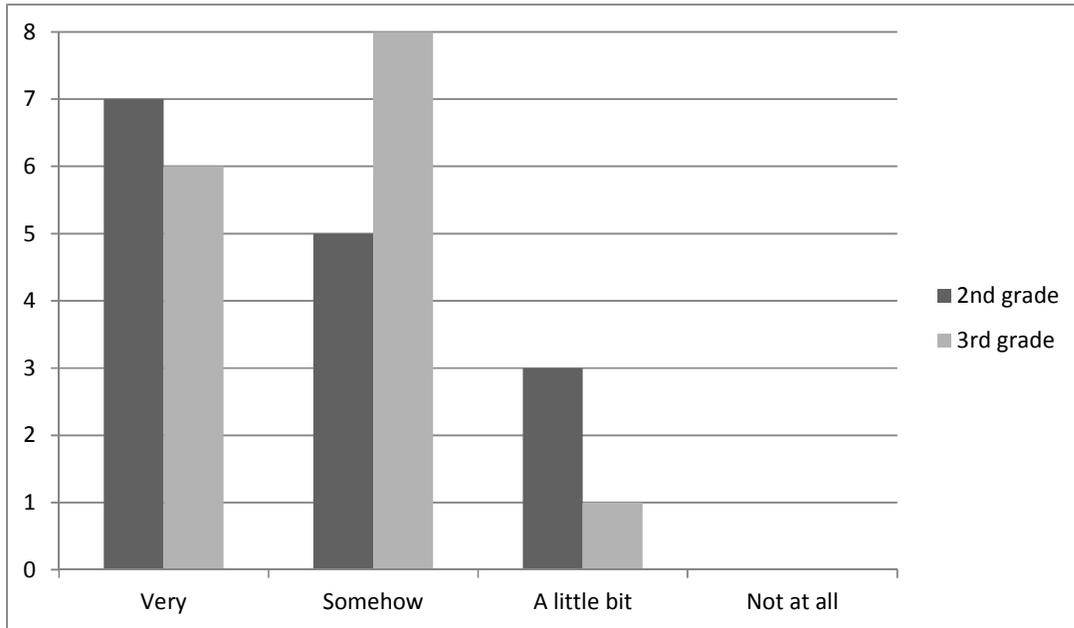


FIGURE 6. The children's opinions about the importance of learning English

The students believed generally that learning English was important. None of them answered that it was not important at all. The students' opinions changed a little between the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> grade. On the 2<sup>nd</sup> grade the most common answer (7 students) was that learning English was very important, but three students also thought it was important only a little bit. On the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade the most common answer was that learning English was somehow important (8 students), but only one student thought it was important only a little bit.

## 2. How nice is it for you to start learning English next autumn? (2<sup>nd</sup> grade)

### How nice is it for you to learn English at school? (3<sup>rd</sup> grade)

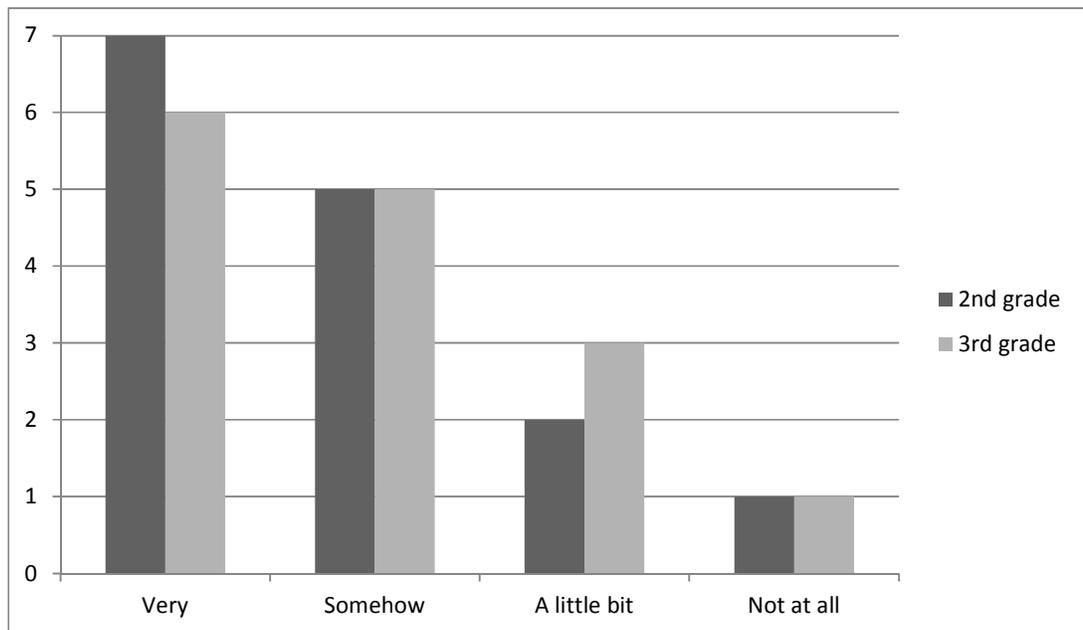


FIGURE 7. The children's opinions about how nice it is to learn English at school

The students have generally positive attitudes about learning English at school. Learning English at school was relatively nice or very nice for 12 students on the 2<sup>nd</sup> grade and for 11 students on the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade. However, there were also two students on the 2<sup>nd</sup> grade and three students on the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade who liked learning English only a little and one student who did not like learning English at all. Thus the students' attitudes changed slightly into more negative ones on the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade.

### 3. How easy do you assume it to be to study English? (2<sup>nd</sup> grade)

How easy is it for you to study English? (3<sup>rd</sup> grade)

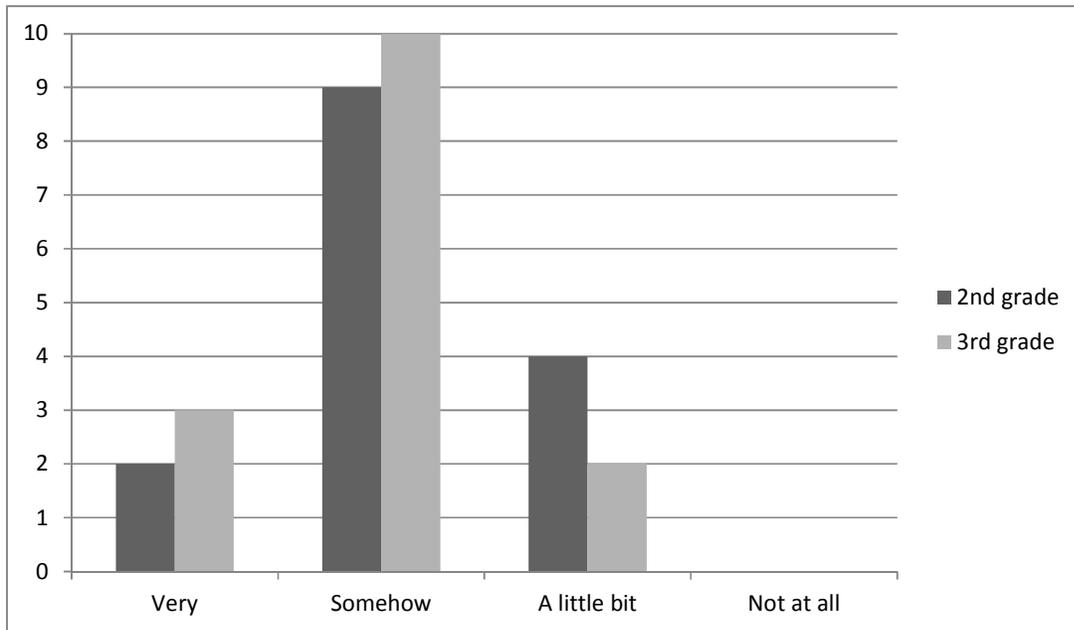


FIGURE 8. The children's opinions about how easy it is to learn English at school

The students' opinions in total have changed only slightly. The majority of them (9 students) assumed on the 2<sup>nd</sup> grade that learning English would be relatively easy, and the majority of them (10 students) still think on the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade that it is relatively easy. None of the students on either grade believes learning English is not at all easy. The opinions have changed slightly into more positive ones, since on the 2<sup>nd</sup> grade four students and on the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade only two students thought learning English would be or is only a little bit easy.

#### 4. How nice is it for you to hear English in your free time?

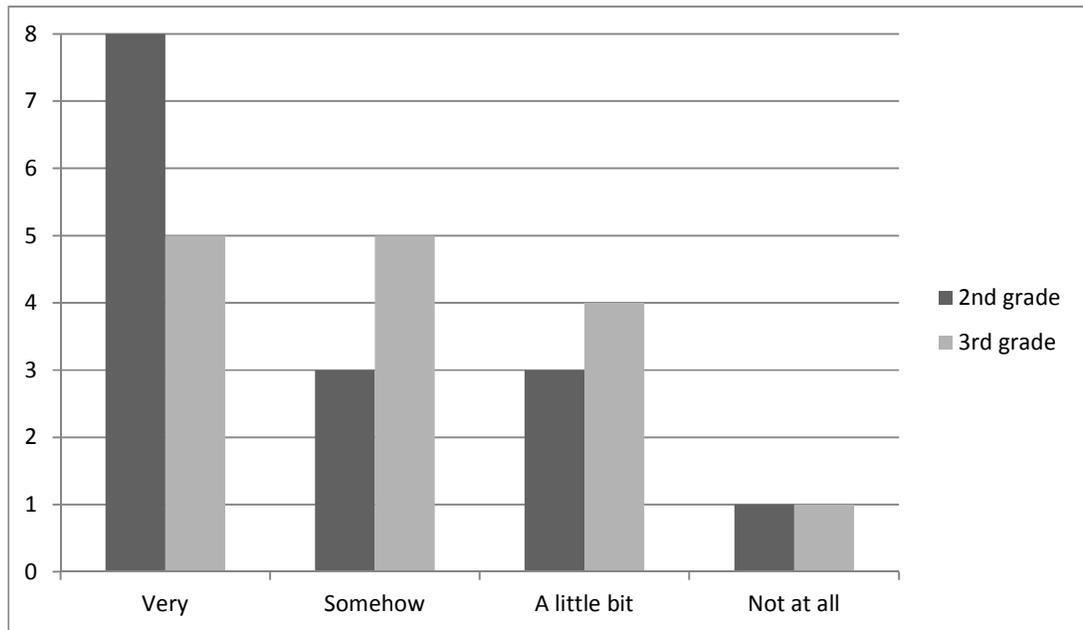


FIGURE 9. The children's opinions about how nice it is to hear English in their free time

The appeal of hearing English in their free time has diminished among the students on the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade. On the 2<sup>nd</sup> grade over a half of them (8 students) answered that it is very nice to hear English in their free time. On the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade the answers were divided more evenly between hearing English being very nice (5 students), somehow nice (5 students) or a little bit nice (4 students). Only one student on both grades had the opinion that hearing English in free time was not nice at all.

### 5. How nice do you think it would be to use English in your free time?

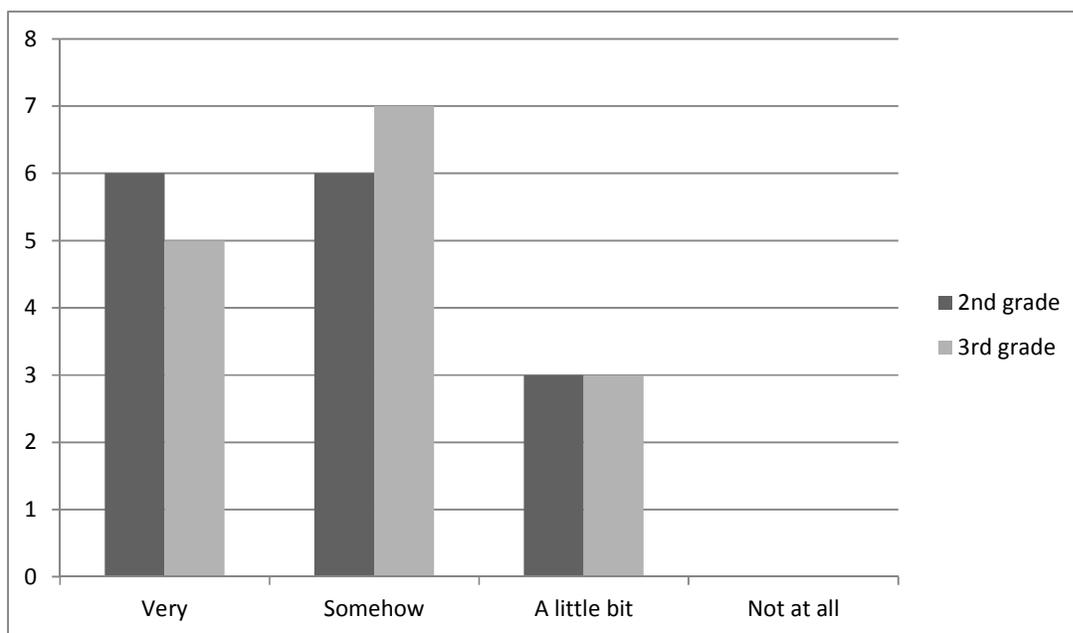


FIGURE 10. The children's opinions about how nice it is to use English in their free time

On both grades 12 students thought that it would be somehow or very nice to use English in their free time. Three students thought that it would be only a little bit nice. However, none of them thought it would not be nice at all. The answers have not changed significantly between the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> grade.

#### Changes between the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> grade with respect to individual students

The answers to all the questions in Part 3 were coded with numbers: Very = 3, To some extent = 2, A little = 1 and Not at all = 0. All the students' responses were analysed individually and the changes in their answers between the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> grade were indicated. For instance, if the student had answered *to some extent* to a certain question both on the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> grade, this was marked as 0 (no change). If the student had answered *a little* (=1) on the 2<sup>nd</sup> grade, and *to some extent* (=2) on the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade, the change was marked as +1. On the other hand, if the student had answered *to some extent* (=2) on the 2<sup>nd</sup> grade and *a little* (=1) on the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade, the change was marked as -1.

All the questions were formulated in a positive way, since all of them asked how important, nice or easy it was to study English or hear and use English in free time. Thus the changes that are negative (-1 etc.) directly reflect attitudes having changed into more negative ones toward the English language between the grades. Vice versa, the changes that are positive (+1 etc.) reflect attitudes having changed into more positive ones. Thus positive changes is a term used for the cases when compared to their own opinions on the 2<sup>nd</sup> grade, the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade students see learning English as more important, like learning English more than they expected, think learning English is easier than they expected, and like more hearing and using English in their free time. The answers coded as positive or negative changes are first shown as a total for all students as a group and then on individual student levels.

	Change among all students
How important do you think it is to learn English?	+1
How nice is it for you to learn English at school?	-2
How easy is it for you to study English?	+3
How nice is it for you to hear English in your free time?	-4
How nice do you think it would be to use English in your free time?	-1

FIGURE 11. The change in attitudes among all the students as a group between the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> grade

When looking at the results of all the students, and how their attitudes have changed between the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> grade, there are both positive and negative changes in their totals. The opinion about the easiness to study English has changed the most positively (+3) which means that in total studying English is considered easier than the students had expected on the 2<sup>nd</sup> grade. The opinion about the importance of learning English has also changed positively even though only slightly (+1) which means that the students find learning English slightly more important on the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade. Learning English at school has lost some of its appeal since opinions about how nice it is to learn English at school have changed negatively (-2). Using English in free time has lost a little of its appeal as well (-1). The question with the most negative change is about hearing English in free time (-4): on the 2<sup>nd</sup> grade students found hearing English in their free time nicer than on the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade.

### Changes in individual students' answers

The individual students' answers were also analysed in order to see if their answers to the questions had changed positively or negatively. There were five students whose answers to all questions had changed only positively or had not changed at all, and thus their totals were all positive. In addition, there were six students, whose answers to all questions had changed only negatively or had not changed at all, consequently resulting in their totals to be negative. Four students had both positive and negative changes in their answers, and their totals were 0 or +1.

	Students	Their totals
Only positive (or neutral) changes	5	+1, +2, +2, +4, +6
Only negative (or neutral) changes	6	-1, -3, -3, -3, -3, -6
Both positive and negative changes	4	0, 0, 0, +1

FIGURE 12. The changes in individual students' attitudes

As mentioned above, positive changes is a term used for the changes when compared to the students' opinions on the 2<sup>nd</sup> grade, the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade students see learning English as more important, like learning English more than they expected, think learning English is easier than they expected, and like more hearing and using English in their free time. Five students had only positive changes, although the change was not very significant (+1 or +2) except for two of them (+4 and +6). Six students had only negative changes and the change was somehow significant with 5 of them (-3 and in one case -6) whereas one student had a total of -1. Four students had both positive and negative changes and their total stayed 0 or +1.

The groups of students with positive, neutral and negative changes are about the same size, 4–6 students. However, the students with negative changes display slightly bigger changes than students with positive changes. Four students have a negative total change of -3 and one student has a total change of -6. In comparison, only two students show significant increase in positive attitudes about English. There are two students whose attitudes have changed positively or negatively in a significant way, +6 and -6. To

conclude, the students' attitudes have changed between the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> grade, some reporting more positive attitudes on the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade and others more negative attitudes.

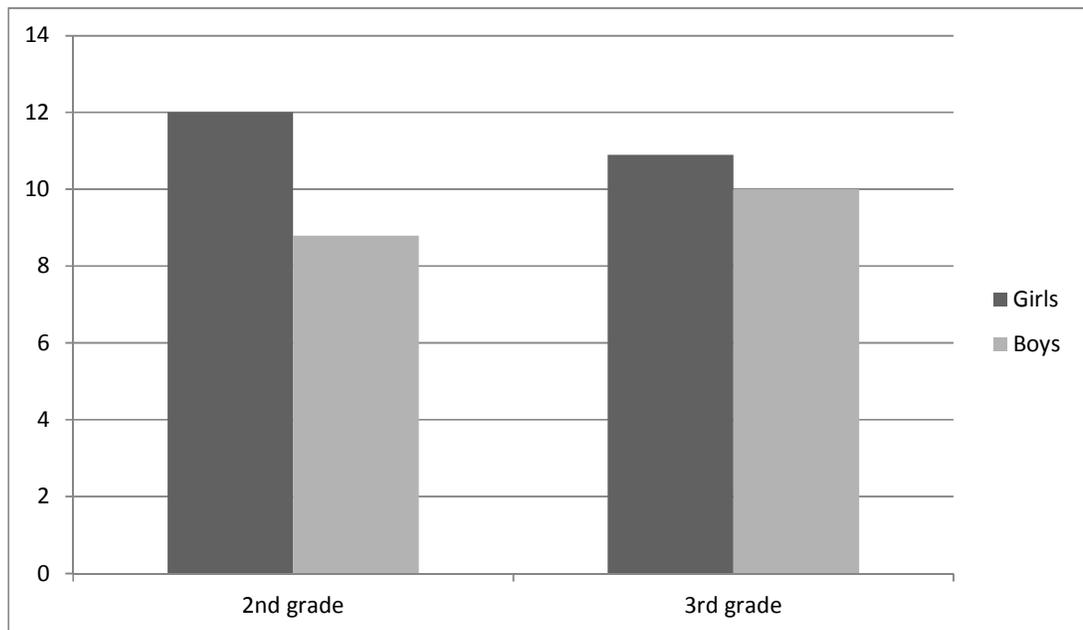


FIGURE 13. The positive attitudes towards English by gender

The genders were compared through their totals of answers about attitudes. On both grades, girls had generally more positive attitudes towards English than boys. However, the girls' general positivity about English has decreased from the 2<sup>nd</sup> grade (12) to the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade (10.9). On the other hand, boys' general positivity about English has increased from the 2<sup>nd</sup> grade (8.8) to the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade (10). Thus the difference between genders is smaller on the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade but the girls' responses are still slightly more positive than the boys' responses.

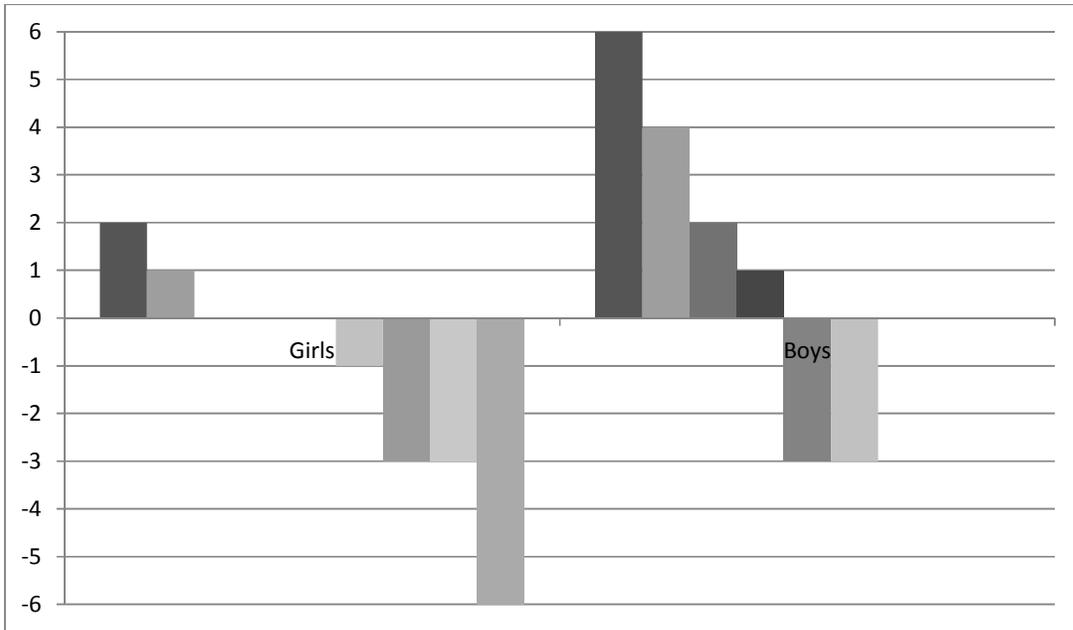


FIGURE 14. Individual changes between the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> grade by gender

When comparing the situation on the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> grade, two girls have become more positive about English, three of them have a neutral change, and four of them have become more negative. Four boys have become more positive and two boys more negative.

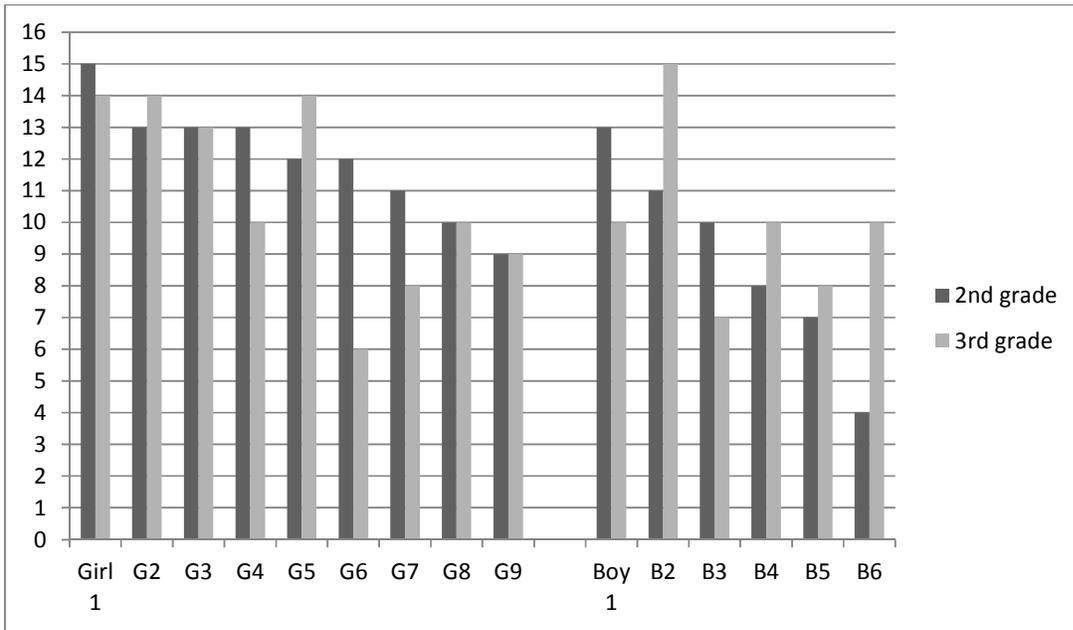


FIGURE 15. Individual changes between the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> grade (in the order of highest-lowest positive attitudes on the 2<sup>nd</sup> grade)

Individual changes provide more support for the fact that the change between the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> grade seems to have been more positive for the boys than the girls. Four boys have changed their opinions to be generally more positive, and two boys more negative. Only two girls have become generally more positive in their attitudes, three girls have not changed as it comes to the total of their answers, and four girls have changed their opinions to be generally more negative. However, it should be taken into account that girls had generally more positive attitudes than boys both on the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> grade. Their attitudes changed more negatively between the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> grade but they still stayed more positive than the boys' attitudes in general.

#### Part 4

**In your opinion, what is the most important reason to study English?**

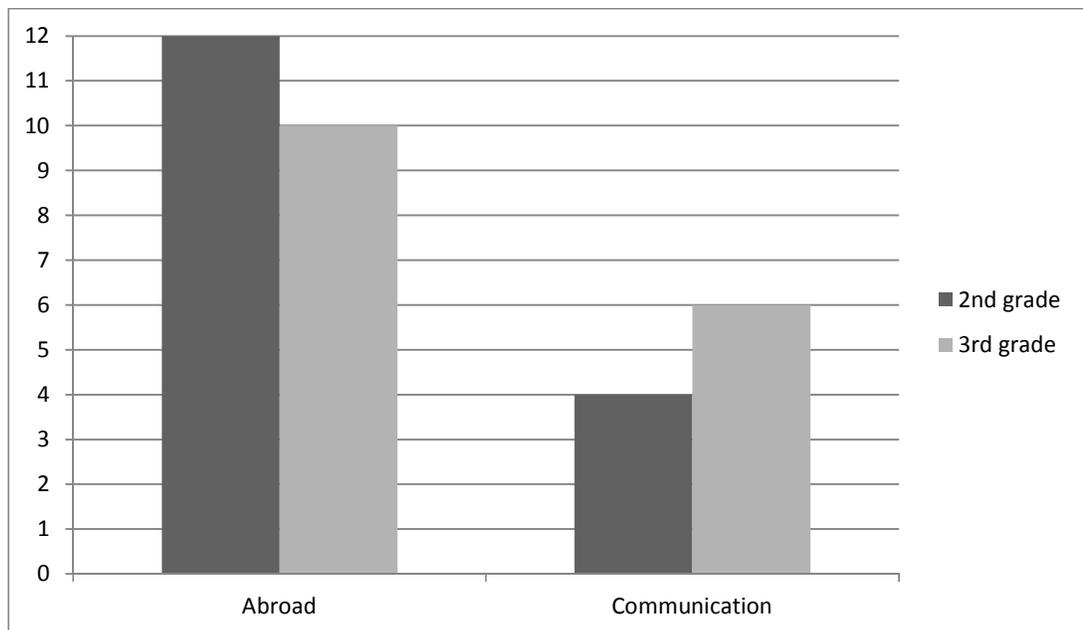


FIGURE 16. The reasons for studying English

The most important reasons for the children to study English were all part of two categories: travelling abroad and communication. The answers have not changed significantly between the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> grade as it comes to the most important reason to study English. The most common answer on both grades is travelling abroad. The answers concerning travelling abroad were the following (the students' Finnish answers are given in brackets):

- One can use it in other countries as well. (2<sup>nd</sup> grade) (Voi käyttää sitä muissakin maissa.)
- One can talk abroad with people. (2<sup>nd</sup> grade) (Voi jutella ulkomailla ihmisten kanssa.)
- With it one manages abroad. (2<sup>nd</sup> grade) (Sillä pärjää ulkomailla.)
- If I go abroad I have the skills and I understand. (2<sup>nd</sup> grade) (Jos menen ulkomaille osaan ja ymmärrän.)
- To be able to speak English abroad. (2<sup>nd</sup> grade) (Että osaan puhua englantia ulkomailla.)
- To be able to speak English abroad. For instance if one goes to Germany, and cannot speak German, they can speak English. (2<sup>nd</sup> grade) (Että voi puhua ulkomailla englantia. Jos menee vaikka Saksaan, eikä osaa saksaa, voi puhua englantia.)
- To be able to speak with foreigners, because I travel a lot. (2<sup>nd</sup> grade) (Että voi puhua erimaalaisten ihmisten kanssa, koska käyn paljon matkoilla.)
- If one goes abroad when they are grown-up, they need to know English. (2<sup>nd</sup> grade) (Jos menee isona ulkomaille niin pitää osata englantia.)
- If I go to a different country I could speak different country. (2<sup>nd</sup> grade) (Jos menen erimaahan osaisin puhua eri maata.)
- If one goes abroad, one can speak it. (2<sup>nd</sup> grade) (Jos käy ulkomailla, osaa puhua sitä.)
- Abroad one understands better and is able to have a conversation. (3<sup>rd</sup> grade) (Ulkomailla ymmärtää paremmin ja pystyy keskustelemaan.)
- One manages abroad. (3<sup>rd</sup> grade) (Pärjää ulkomailla.)
- To manage abroad. (3<sup>rd</sup> grade) (Että pärjää ulkomailla.)
- To be able to go abroad. (3<sup>rd</sup> grade) (Että voi mennä ulkomaille.)
- One manages abroad. (3<sup>rd</sup> grade) (Pärjää ulkomailla.)
- To be able to speak English abroad. (3<sup>rd</sup> grade) (Että pystyy puhumaan ulkomailla englantia.)
- To be able to speak with foreigners while travelling abroad. (3<sup>rd</sup> grade) (Että voi puhua ulkomaan matkoilla ulkomaalaisten kanssa.)
- To manage abroad. (3<sup>rd</sup> grade) (Että pärjää ulkomailla.)

Communication in general or talking with foreigners was the other area of reasons that students found important for studying English.

- Communicating with other people. (2<sup>nd</sup> grade) (Kommunikointi muiden ihmisten kanssa.)
- Talking with foreigners. (2<sup>nd</sup> grade) (Puhuminen muun maalaisten kanssa.)
- To be able to speak English. (2<sup>nd</sup> grade) (Siksi että voisi puhua englantia.)
- To be able to speak also with people from different countries. (3<sup>rd</sup> grade) (Että voi puhua myös erimaalaisille.)
- Then one can speak with / get to know others. (3<sup>rd</sup> grade) (Sillon voi puhua / tutustua muiden kanssa.)
- Talking with foreigners. (3<sup>rd</sup> grade) (Ulkomaalaisten kanssa puhuminen.)
- Then one can speak with foreigners. (3<sup>rd</sup> grade) (Sitten osaa puhua erimaalaisten kanssa.)
- One can speak with foreigners. (3<sup>rd</sup> grade) (Voi puhua ulkomaalaisten kanssa.)

Two students had both aspects, going abroad and general communication, in their answers.

To manage abroad and to be able to have a conversation with people from different countries. (2<sup>nd</sup> grade) (Että pärjää ulkomailla ja voi keskustella erimaalaisten kanssa.)

If one is abroad, they are able to understand. If mother and father are talking something in secret, one can understand. (3<sup>rd</sup> grade) (Jos on ulkomailla, pystyy ymmärtämään. Jos äiti ja isä puhuvat jotakin salaa, pystyy ymmärtämään.)

One student had the aspect of war in both 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> grade answers.

If there will be war in Finland, and one needs to move to a foreign country. (2<sup>nd</sup> grade) (Jos Suomeen tulee sota ja joutuu muuttamaan vieraaseen maahan.)

If I would be evacuated to another country for a while, so I would be able to speak English. (3<sup>rd</sup> grade) (Jos minut evakuoitaisiin toiseen maahan hetkeksi, niin osaisi puhua englantia.)

## Part 5

### In which situations it would be nice for you to be able to use English?

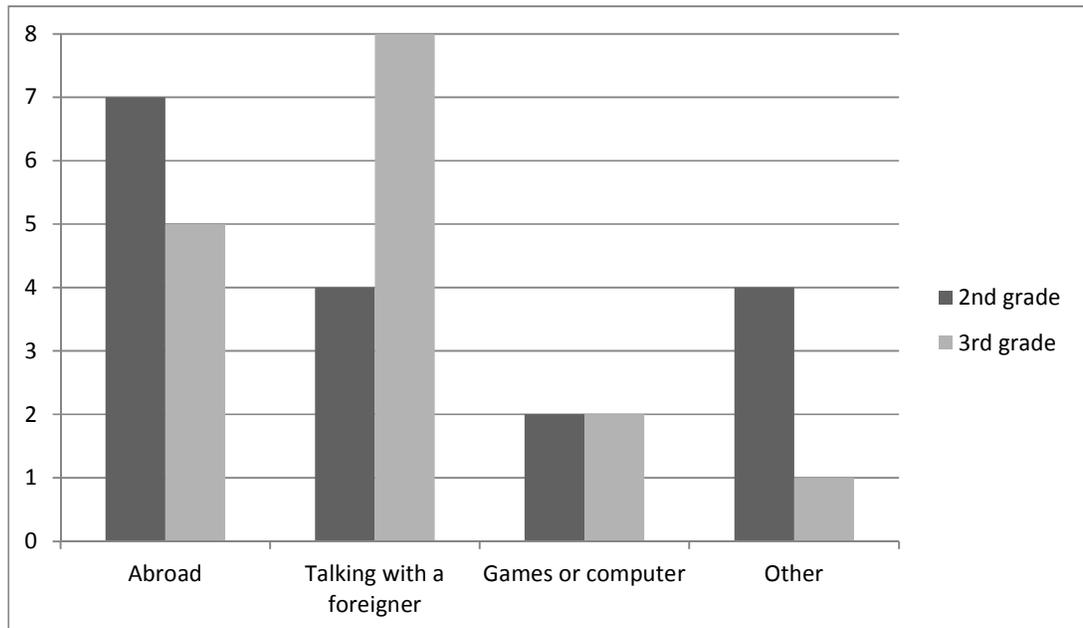


FIGURE 17. The situations in which the children would like to be able to use English

Communicative situations are clearly the majority among situations in which the children would like to be able to use English. The majority of the situations they described have to do with travelling and talking with foreigners. A few of them mentioned needing English with playing games or using computer, and some of them had other reasons for needing English which were the following.

At home, so I would understand what mother and father are whispering. (2<sup>nd</sup> grade) (Kotona, että ymmärtäisin mitä äiti ja isä kuiskuttelevat.)

At school and when going abroad. (2<sup>nd</sup> grade) (Koulussa ja kun lähtee ulkomaille.)

When the children of family friends speak English with their own relatives. (2<sup>nd</sup> grade) (Kun tuttavaperheen lapset puhuvat enkkuja omille sukulaisilleen.)

In all situations. (2<sup>nd</sup> grade) (Kaikissa tilanteissa.)

When talking. (3<sup>rd</sup> grade) (Juttelussa.)

As far as the use of English abroad was concerned, some students answered that it would be nice to be able to use English abroad in general whereas some of them described specific situations in which they would need English.

Abroad. (2<sup>nd</sup> grade) (Ulkomailla.)

I am in a shop abroad, mother is trying on clothes and I need to be able to go to the bathroom. (2<sup>nd</sup> grade) (Olen ulkomailla kaupassa, äiti on sovittamassa vaatteita ja minun pitää päästä vessaan.)

Speaking abroad in a hotel and in a restaurant. (2<sup>nd</sup> grade) (Puhuminen ulkomailla hotellissa ja ravintolassa.)

Abroad e.g. in shops. (2<sup>nd</sup> grade) (Ulkomailla esim. kaupoissa.)

So I am able to ask for advice abroad. (2<sup>nd</sup> grade) (Että voin kysyä neuvoa ulkomailla.)

Abroad to speak with others. (2<sup>nd</sup> grade) (Ulkomailla puhua toisten kanssa.)

To be able to buy ice cream. (3<sup>rd</sup> grade) (Että voi ostaa jäätelöä.)

Abroad. (3<sup>rd</sup> grade) (Ulkomailla.)

Travelling. (3<sup>rd</sup> grade) (Matkustelussa.)

Abroad one understands better and is able to have a conversation. (3<sup>rd</sup> grade) (Ulkomailla ymmärtää paremmin ja pystyy keskustelemaan.)

When the answer concerned talking with foreigners in general, many students answered simply talking with foreigners although some of them described a more specific situation.

If some foreigner would come to talk something in English, I would understand. (2<sup>nd</sup> grade) (Jos joku ulkomaalainen tulisi puhumaan jotain englanniksi, niin ymmärtäisi.)

- When talking with a foreigner. (2<sup>nd</sup> grade) (Puhuessu ulkomaalaisen kanssa.)
- If one meets foreigners. (2<sup>nd</sup> grade) (Jos tapaa ulkomaalaisia.)
- If I want to talk with a foreigner. (3<sup>rd</sup> grade) (Jos haluan puhua jonkun vierasmaalaisen kanssa.)
- If talking with some unknown English person. (3<sup>rd</sup> grade) (Jos puhuu jonkun tuntemattoman englantilaisen kanssa.)
- When talking with a foreigner. (3<sup>rd</sup> grade) (Kun puhuu ulkomaalaisen kanssa.)
- When someone cannot speak Finnish. (3<sup>rd</sup> grade) (Kun joku ei osaa suomea.)
- If I would get a friend who speaks English. (3<sup>rd</sup> grade) (Jos saisin englanninkielisen kaverin.)

There was a small change between the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> grade with respect to whether the students were talking about using English abroad or with foreigners probably in Finland. On the 2<sup>nd</sup> grade seven students mentioned needing English abroad and four with foreigners in general, whereas on the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade five students thought they needed English abroad and eight students with foreigners. On the 2<sup>nd</sup> grade there was only one case when it was completely clear that the student was talking about using English in Finland, whereas on the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade there were three cases like that.

- We are going to have an au pair who only speaks English. It would be nice to be able to speak with him/her. (2<sup>nd</sup> grade) (Meille tulee au pair joka puhuu vain englantia, olisi kiva osata jutella sen kanssa.)
- When some tourist who has come to Finland asks something. (3<sup>rd</sup> grade) (Kun joku Suomeen tullut turisti kysyy jotain.)
- When foreign guests are visiting. (3<sup>rd</sup> grade) (Kun ulkomaalaisia vieraita tulee kylään.)
- To help foreigners who are visiting Finland. (3<sup>rd</sup> grade) (Auttaa ulkomaalaisia, jotka vierailevat Suomessa.)

Thus the 3<sup>rd</sup> graders described more often situations where English was needed to talk with foreigners in general, whereas the 2<sup>nd</sup> graders thought about using it abroad more often. It might be that starting to learn English at school has made the students notice that they may need English also in Finland. English is needed in Finland also for playing games or using the computer which came across in the answers of two students on both grades.

- When playing English games. (2<sup>nd</sup> grade) (Englanninkielisiä pelejä pelatessa.)
- With computer stuff. (2<sup>nd</sup> grade) (Tietokonehommissa.)
- Abroad or when playing Xbox + with computer. (3<sup>rd</sup> grade) (Ulkomailla tai kun pelaa xboxia + tietokoneella.)
- In games. (3<sup>rd</sup> grade) (Peleissä.)

## Part 6

### Do you think that English is needed in Finland?

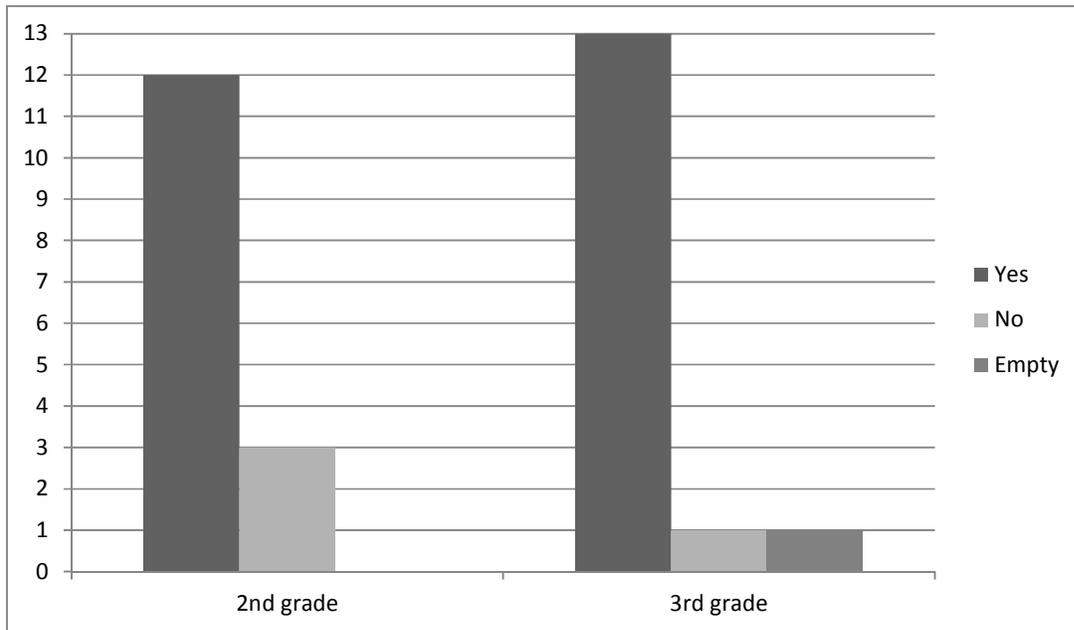


FIGURE 18. The children's opinions about whether or not English is needed in Finland

Children's opinions have not changed significantly between the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> grade. On the 2<sup>nd</sup> grade 12 students and on the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade 13 students thought English was needed in Finland. Two students changed their answer from "No" on the 2<sup>nd</sup> grade to "Yes" on the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade. One student answered "No" on both grades. One student did not answer the question on the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade.

### Why or why not is English needed in Finland?

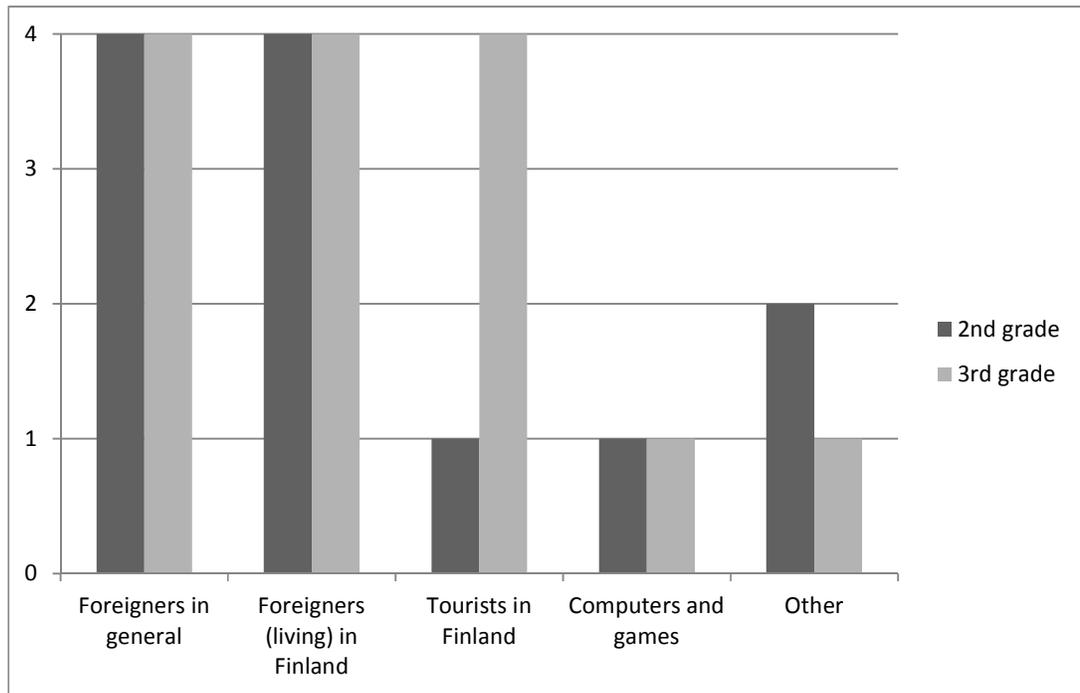


FIGURE 19. The children's reasons why English is needed in Finland

The reasons given by students to support the importance of English in Finland are mostly about foreigners and tourists. On the 2<sup>nd</sup> grade foreigners and tourists were included in the answers of nine students and on the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade they were mentioned by twelve students. Foreigners in general were mentioned four times both on the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> grade.

If there are foreigners one can speak with them – it is an international language. (2<sup>nd</sup> grade) (Jos on ulkomaalaisia ihmisiä voi puhua niiden kanssa – se on kansainvälinen kieli.)

With foreigners who don't understand Finnish. (2<sup>nd</sup> grade) (Erimaalaisien kanssa, jotka ei ymmärrä suomea.)

If one has foreign friends. (2<sup>nd</sup> grade) (Jos on erimaalaisia ystäviä.)

Because if a foreigner asks something. (2<sup>nd</sup> grade) (Koska jos ulkomaalainen kysyy jotain.)

Because not everybody speaks Finnish. (3<sup>rd</sup> grade) (Koska kaikki eivät puhu suomea.)

Talking with foreigners. (3<sup>rd</sup> grade) (Ulkomaalaisille puhuminen.)

Foreigners, online, games. (3<sup>rd</sup> grade) (Ulkomaalaiset, verkossa, peleissä.)

A little bit, if a foreigner asks for some advice. (3<sup>rd</sup> grade) (Vähän, jos ulkomaalainen pyytää jotain neuvoa.)

Foreigners living in Finland were also mentioned four times both on the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> grade.

One can talk with English speaking people who have moved here. (2<sup>nd</sup> grade) (Voi jutella tänne muuttaneiden enkunkielisten kanssa.)

There are foreigners living also in Finland. (2<sup>nd</sup> grade) (Suomessakin asuu ulkomaalaisia.)

Because there are foreigners also in Finland. (2<sup>nd</sup> grade) (Koska Suomessakin on ulkomaalaisia.)

There are a lot of English speaking people here. (2<sup>nd</sup> grade) (Täällä on paljon englanninkielisiä.)

Also here there are foreigners. (3<sup>rd</sup> grade) (Täälläkin on ulkomaalaisia ihmisiä.)

Because there are foreigners in Finland. (3<sup>rd</sup> grade) (Koska Suomessa on erimaalaisia.)

One can talk for instance with foreigners who live in Finland. (3<sup>rd</sup> grade) (Pystyy puhumaan vaikka Suomessa asuvien ulkomaalaisten kanssa.)

Because there are a lot of foreigners here. (3<sup>rd</sup> grade) (Koska täällä on paljon ulkomaalaisia.)

Tourists were mentioned once on the 2<sup>nd</sup> grade and four times on the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade.

Because if for instance one needs to give advice to some foreigner, where is some attraction. (2<sup>nd</sup> grade) (Koska jos pitää vaikka neuvoa jotain ulkomaalaista, että missä on jokin nähtävyyys.)

If a tourist asks something. (3<sup>rd</sup> grade) (Jos turisti kysyy jotain.)

Because many foreigners visit here. (3<sup>rd</sup> grade) (Koska täällä käy monia erimaalaisia.)

Because some people may travel to Finland. (3<sup>rd</sup> grade) (Koska jotkut voivat matkustaa Suomeen.)

Because how else could we speak with tourists? (3<sup>rd</sup> grade) (Koska miten me voitais muuten puhua turisteille?)

Computers or games were included in the answer of one student on the 2<sup>nd</sup> grade and one student on the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade.

E.g. instructions for computer remain unclear, if one does not know English. (2<sup>nd</sup> grade) (Esim. tietokoneen ohjeet jää epäselväksi, jos ei osaa englantia.)

Foreigners, online, games. (3<sup>rd</sup> grade) (Ulkomaalaiset, verkossa, peleissä.)

Other answers were the following:

It is an important language. (2<sup>nd</sup> grade) (Se on tärkeä kieli.)

I don't know. (2<sup>nd</sup> grade) (En tiedä.)

For studying. (3<sup>rd</sup> grade) (Opiskeluun.)

On the 2<sup>nd</sup> grade three students and on the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade one student answered that English is not needed in Finland. Their reasons for their opinion were the following:

Finnish is spoken here. (2<sup>nd</sup> grade) (Täällä puhutaan suomea.)

I don't know for what it is needed. (2<sup>nd</sup> grade) (En tiedä, mihin tarvitaan.)

Not that much, no because there are more Finnish people here. (2<sup>nd</sup> grade) (Ei hirveesti, ei koska täällä on suomalaisia enemmän.)

In Finland Finnish, Swedish and Russian are spoken. (3<sup>rd</sup> grade) (Suomessa puhutaan suomea, ruotsia ja venäjää.)

The students generally think that English is needed in Finland. Their answers reveal that the need to use English is most commonly associated with communicating with people who do not speak Finnish. A few students associated the need to use English with computers, and some thought about its importance in a wider point of view. Only one student thought that it was needed for studying. However, the question did not ask to include many reasons why English is needed and thus most of the children provided only one reason. Thus the answers most likely reveal the first reason that came to their mind but not all possible reasons they could have thought of.

## Part 7

### Would you like to hear or use more English in your free time?

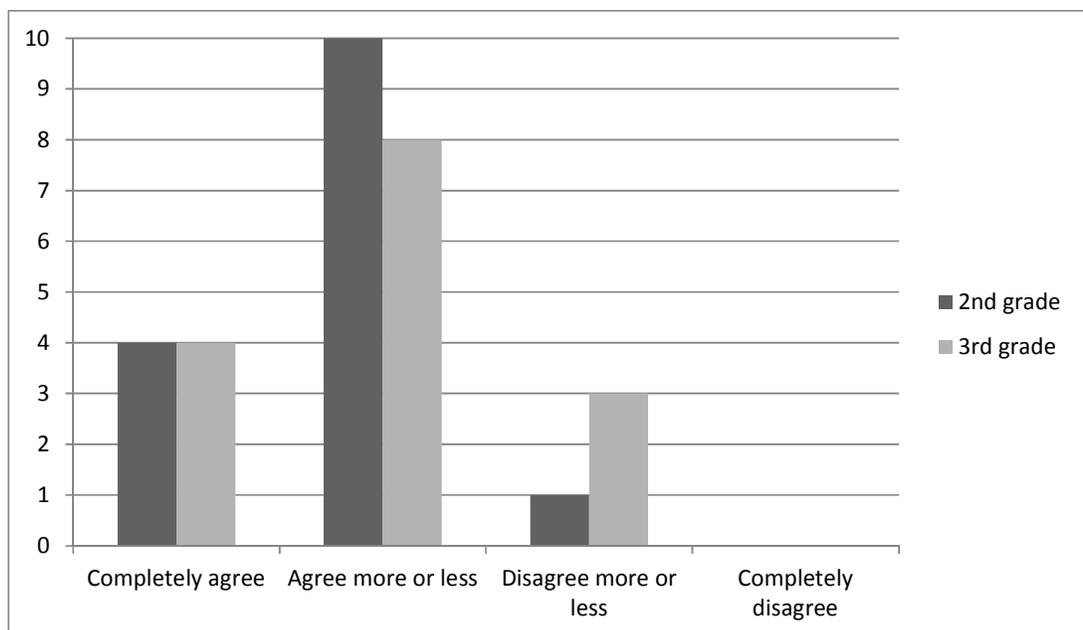


FIGURE 20. The children's willingness to hear or use more English in their free time

Students are quite positive about hearing and using English in their free time. 27% agree completely that they would like to hear or use more English, and 67% on the 2<sup>nd</sup> grade and 53% on the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade agree more or less. However, whereas on the 2<sup>nd</sup> grade only one student disagreed more or less with the statement, on the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade there were three students who disagreed more or less. This may be natural as on the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade English is a part of school and includes homework, for instance. The initial enthusiasm about foreign language may be wearing off for these students. However, none of the students completely disagreed with the statement on either grade.

## Part 8

**Do you believe you learn English more at school or in your free time?**

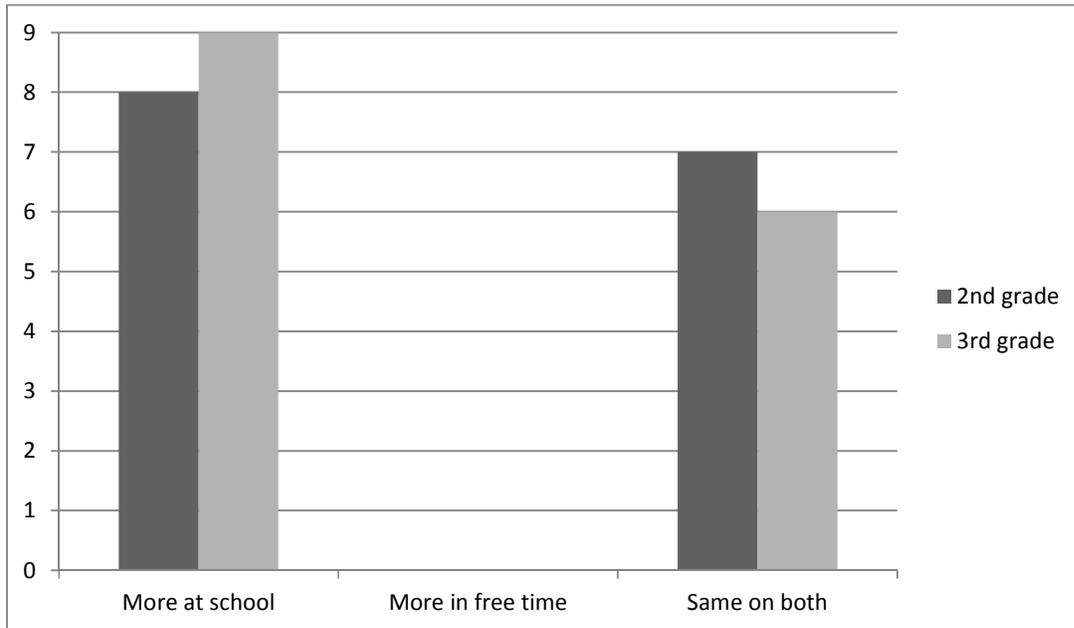


FIGURE 21. The children's opinions about learning English at school or in free time

None of the students believes they will learn more English in free time than at school. However, almost half of the students believe they will learn English as much in free time as at school. This seems to show that the students realize the opportunities and possibilities they have to learn English also outside the school. There is no significant change between the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> grade in results.

## Part 9

What things come into your mind when you hear the words *the English language*?

Name 3 things.

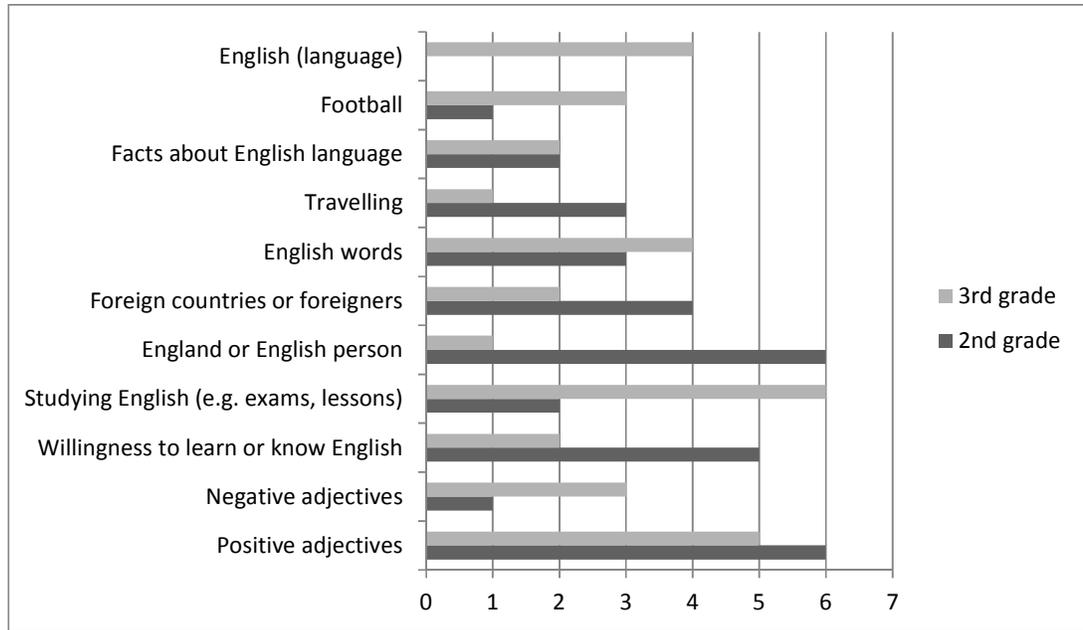


FIGURE 22. Associations with the words *the English language*

Answers varied a lot between students. Positive adjectives were quite common both on the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> grade, including adjectives such as *glad (iloinen)*, *nice (kiva, mukava)*, *fun (hauska)* and *easy (helppo)*. Negative adjectives were not that common and included for instance *irritating (ärsyttävä)* and *weird (omituinen)*. On the 2<sup>nd</sup> grade England or English person and foreign countries or foreigners were mentioned various times. Five students also expressed willingness to learn English, in the following ways:

I would like to learn it. (2<sup>nd</sup> grade) (Haluaisin oppia sitä.)

It would be great to know it. (2<sup>nd</sup> grade) (Ois hieno osata sitä.)

New goals. (2<sup>nd</sup> grade) (Uusia tavoitteita.)

It would be worth it to learn it. (2<sup>nd</sup> grade) (Kannattaisi opetella.)

Willingness to participate immediately in the talking (2<sup>nd</sup> grade) (Halu ryhtyä heti jutteluun mukaan.)

On the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade studying English was mentioned various times, by mentioning *school (koulu)*, *homework (läksyt)*, *English lessons (Englannin oppitunti, englannin tunnit)* or *last lessons (viimeiset oppitunnit)*. The English language as such, as well as specific

English words, were also mentioned. One student had all three answers on the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade connected with football: *Wayne Rooney, Manchester United, the English national football team (Englannin jalkapallomaajoukkue)*. On the 2<sup>nd</sup> grade the same student had answered only *football (jalkapallo)*, showing consistency in his connection with football and English language.

Besides the answers that were one of the types mentioned before, there were various different answers. On the 2<sup>nd</sup> grade these included *the Dutch language (hollannin kieli), Finland is a completely stupid country (Suomi on ihan tyhmä maa), new acquaintances (uusien tuttavuuksia), language of human (ihmisen kieli), fish (kala), games (pelit) and speaking in English (englannin kielellä puhuminen)*. On the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade the answers left outside of the groups were *not really anything (ei oikeastaan mitään), unknown (ei tuttu), England/English word (Englanti-sana), Language-word (Kieli-sana), dog (koira) and au pair (au pairi)*. One student answered on the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade “*boredom, muffin, red pillow. not else ☺ ☺ ☺*” (*tylsyys, muffinssi, punainen tyyny. eipä muuta. ☺ ☺ ☺*).

To conclude, the students have a variety of associations for the words *English language*. The associations are mainly positive or neutral, negative associations being slightly more common on the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade than on the 2<sup>nd</sup> grade. On the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade *English language* is associated more with school than on the 2<sup>nd</sup> grade. Foreign countries (especially England) and foreigners (especially English people) are common associations on both grades.

## Part 10

In your opinion, what kind of language is English? Name 3 things.

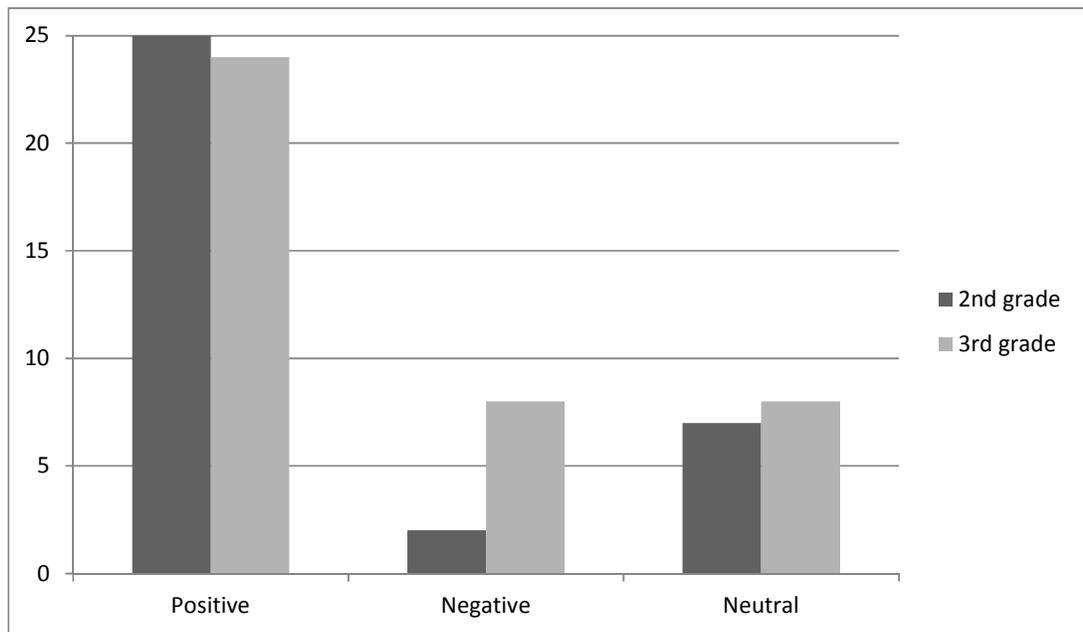


FIGURE 23. The amount of positive, negative and neutral descriptions of the English language

There is no significant change in the amount of positive and neutral descriptions of the English language. The positive descriptions have decreased by one answer and neutral ones have increased by one answer. However, the negative descriptions have increased by six answers which could be considered significant. The positive descriptions included *funny* (*hauska; hassu; hauskan kuuloista; kuulostaa hassulta*), *nice* (*kiva; mukava*), *entertaining* (*viihdyttävä*), *useful* (*tarpeellinen; hyödyllinen*), *great language* (*hieno kieli; hyvä kieli*), *easy* (*helppoa; aika helppo; suht helppo oppia*), *interesting* (*mielenkiintoinen*), *I could speak in English with mother/father* (*voisi jutella äidin/isän kanssa englanniksi*) and *can be used anywhere* (*voi käyttää kaikkialla*). The negative descriptions included *difficult* (*vaikea; vaikea muistaa; hankalaa*), *complicated* (*monimutkainen; monimutkikas*), *sometimes irritating* (*joskus ärsyttävä*), *boring* (*tylsä*) and *pig Latin* (*siansaksaa*). Neutral descriptions were *normal* (*normaali*), *weird* (*outo; seko; kummallinen; jännä; epätavallista; omituinen*), *common* (*yleinen*), *OK* (*OK*), *pretty normal like Finnish* (*aika tavallinen kuten suomikin*), *is similar to Dutch, German and Belgian* (*muistuttaa hollantia, saksaa ja belgiaa*), *practical function*

(käytännöllinen tarkoitus) and *different language (eri kieli)*. Some of these answers were mentioned by more students than one.

## Part 11

### What the English language is used for?

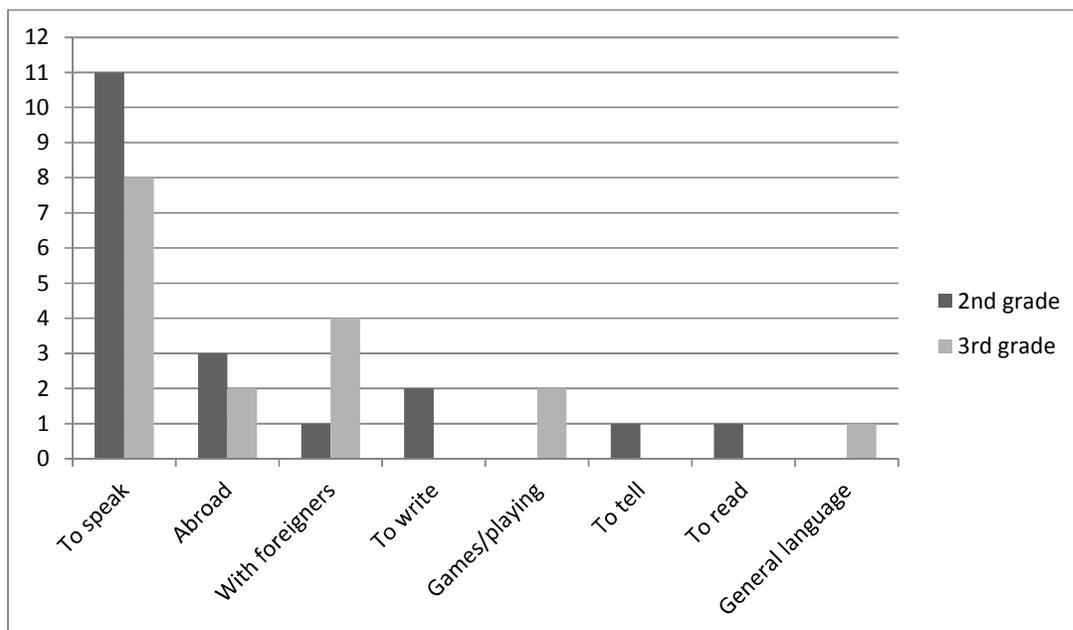


FIGURE 24. The uses of English

In this part of the questionnaire the students were asked what the English language is used for. On the 2<sup>nd</sup> grade the students were listing general things to do with a language: speaking (11), writing (2) and reading (1). Other uses of English included being abroad (3) and talking with foreigners (1), and *telling* (1). On the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade speaking (8), foreigners (4) and travelling (2) were still the most common reasons, but games or playing were mentioned by two students and one student mentioned that English is a general language. Many students answered briefly, for instance *to speak*. The longer answers were the following:

General language with which one can manage in any country. (2<sup>nd</sup> grade) (Yleiskieli, jolla pärjää maassa kun maassa.)

To get food in a foreign country. (2<sup>nd</sup> grade) (Saadaan ruokaa vieraasta maasta.)

If there will be a new English speaking friend then one can speak. (2<sup>nd</sup> grade) (Jos tulee joku uusi englanninkielinen kaveri niin voi puhua.)

To manage abroad. (2<sup>nd</sup> grade) (Ulkomailla pärjäämiseen.)

- It is spoken like we speak Finnish. (2<sup>nd</sup> grade) (Puhutaan sitä niinkuin meillä suomea.)
- To speak with people who do not know Finnish. (3<sup>rd</sup> grade) (Puhutaan sellaisten kanssa jotka ei osaa suomea.)
- It is a general language. (3<sup>rd</sup> grade) (Se on yleiskieli.)
- To speak. Helps if playing some game because games are often in English. (3<sup>rd</sup> grade) (Puhutaan. Apuna, jos pelaa jotakin peliä, koska pelit ovat usein englanninkielisiä.)
- To be able to speak with the English. (3<sup>rd</sup> grade) (Voi keskustella Englantilaisille.)
- To have conversations with foreigners. (3<sup>rd</sup> grade) (Keskustellaan ulkomaalaisten kanssa.)
- To manage abroad. (3<sup>rd</sup> grade) (Pärjätään ulkomailla.)
- To speak with foreigners, to speak with cousins, to socialize (or date). (3<sup>rd</sup> grade) (Puhutaan ulkomaalaisten kanssa, puhutaan serkkujen kanssa, seurustellaan.)

## Part 12

### What else do you think about English language?

On both grades there were few students who responded to this question. When answers *nothing* (*ei mitään*), *not else* (*ei muuta*) and *I don't know* (*en tiedä*) are also excluded, there were five answers on the 2<sup>nd</sup> grade and six answers on the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade. The answers were the following:

- Quite good language. (2<sup>nd</sup> grade) (Ihan hyvä kieli.)
- One of the world's easiest languages to learn. (2<sup>nd</sup> grade) (Yksi maailman helpoimmin opittava kieli.)
- The English flag. (2<sup>nd</sup> grade) (Englannin lippua.)
- It is spoken a lot. (2<sup>nd</sup> grade) (Sitä puhutaan paljon.)
- Fun. (2<sup>nd</sup> grade) (Hauskuutta.)
- Quite ok 😊 (3<sup>rd</sup> grade) (Ihan ok 😊 )
- It is fun. (3<sup>rd</sup> grade) (Se on hauskaa.)
- Nice. (3<sup>rd</sup> grade) (Kivaa.)
- It is interesting. (3<sup>rd</sup> grade) (Se on jännää.)
- Local policemen look stupid. (3<sup>rd</sup> grade) (Paikalliset poliisit näyttää tyhmiltä.)
- It would be nice to learn to speak it well. (3<sup>rd</sup> grade) (Sitä olisi hauska oppia puhumaan kunnolla.)

Eight answers expressed a positive attitude toward English language and three answers were more or less neutral. It seems that an open question like this one may elicit answers from students who have positive attitude towards the subject. These answers are also generally quite neutral. However, it could also elicit more spontaneous and unexpected answers such as the answer about local policemen looking stupid.

**Part 13**

In this part of the questionnaire the students were provided with seven different beginnings of sentences and they were asked to complete the sentences in their own words. The sentences were about the English language: the children were asked to complete sentences about their opinions about English, how it sounds like, and about their own English skills.

**Complete the following sentences:**

2 <sup>nd</sup> grade	3 <sup>rd</sup> grade
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**1. The English language is (Englannin kieli on)**

<p><i>Positive answers:</i>            nice (7 students) (kivaa; mukavaa; mukava kieli)            fun (hauskaa); sounds funny (hassunkuloista)            OK (OK)            necessary (tarpeellinen)</p> <p><i>Neutral answers:</i>            general (yleistä)            a language (kieli)            learning (opettelevaa)</p>	<p><i>Positive answers:</i>            nice (7) (kivaa; mukavaa)            fun (2) (hauskaa)            useful (2) (hyödyllistä); important (tärkeää)            pretty easy (aika helppoa)            interesting (kiinnostava)</p> <p><i>Negative answers:</i>            boring (tylsää)</p>
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The first question was the most general one, asking children to complete a sentence about what English language is. *Nice* is an adjective that seems to be preferred among the children. Almost half of the students, seven students on both grades, answered that the English language is nice. On the 2<sup>nd</sup> grade there were some neutral answers such as *a language* that had disappeared on the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade. On the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade the usefulness and the importance of English were present in three answers whereas one student mentioned on the 2<sup>nd</sup> grade that English was *necessary*.

## 2. For me the English language is (Minulle englannin kieli on)

<p><i>Positive answers:</i></p> <p>nice (2) (mukavaa; kivaa); fun (hauskaa) important (2) (tärkeä); very important (hyvin tärkeä); pretty important (aika tärkeää) pretty interesting (aika kiinnostava) a great language (hieno kieli) having fun and learning (hauskanpitoa ja oppimista)</p> <p><i>Negative answers:</i></p> <p>a little bit difficult (vähän vaikeaa)</p> <p><i>Neutral answers:</i></p> <p>speaking (puhumista) normal (tavallista)</p>	<p><i>Positive answers:</i></p> <p>fun (2) (hauskaa); nice (mukavaa) easy (3) (helppoa), quite easy (aika helppoa) easy (sometimes more difficult) (helppoa (joskus hankalempaa)) weird (outoa) easy and important (helppoa ja tärkeää) important (tärkeää) necessary (tarpeellista)</p> <p><i>Negative answers:</i></p> <p>boring (tylsää) difficult (hankalaa)</p> <p><i>Neutral answers:</i></p> <p>I cannot think of anything (en keksi)</p>
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The second question aimed at getting answers on a more personal level, asking children to complete a sentence about what English language is for them. The answers were mainly positive. *Nice* and *fun* were mentioned various times, and the importance of English came across in the answers of both grades. The difference between grades is that on the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade six students answered that English was easy for them. On both grades one student answered that it was difficult.

## 3. It is nice about the English language that (Englannin kielessä on mukavaa se, että)

<p><i>Communication:</i></p> <p>one can speak it in England (sitä voi puhua Englannissa) one can speak with foreigners (voi puhua ulkomaalaisille) one can speak with English speaking</p>	<p><i>Communication:</i></p> <p>when one has learned it, one can speak with foreigners (kun on oppinut sen voi puhua ulkomaalaisten kanssa) one can use it also in other countries than England (sitä voi käyttää myös muissa)</p>
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<p>people (voi jutella enkkunkielisten kanssa)  one can communicate with many people  (voi kommunikoida monien ihmisten kanssa)  one can speak English (voi puhua englantia)  one is able to speak it (sitä osaa puhua)  one understands (ymmärtää)  one can speak also something else than Finnish (voi puhua muutakin kuin suomea)  one can discuss without others understanding (voi keskustella muiden ymmärtämättä)</p> <p><i>Properties of the language:</i>  there are fun words (siinä on hauskoja sanoja)  it makes one laugh (se naurattaa)  it is easy when practiced well (se on helppoa kun sen harjoittelee kunnolla)</p> <p><i>General:</i>  it exists (se on olemassa)</p>	<p>maissa kuin Englannissa)  one can speak it abroad (voi puhua sitä ulkomailla)  one can speak abroad (pystyy puhumaan ulkomailla)  one manages with it in many countries (sillä pärjää monessa maassa)  one learns to speak (oppii puhumaan)</p> <p><i>Properties of the language:</i>  it is easy to learn (sitä on helppo oppia)  it is only 2 times a week (sitä on vaan 2x viikossa)  it is so easy (se on niin helppoa)  there are short words (siinä on lyhyitä sanoja)  we are allowed to fool around at English lessons (enkuntunnilla saadaan pelleillä)  they are pronounced differently (ne lausutaan erilailla)  it is different than Finnish (se on erillaista kuin suomi)  it resembles Dutch (se muistuttaa hollantia)</p>
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When asked what is nice about the English language, many students' answers were connected with speaking the language and the uses they have for speaking it, for instance going abroad, communicating with many people or having secret conversations. On the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade the students mentioned more often properties of the language, such as the ease to learn English.

**4. A bad thing about the English language is that (Englannin kielessä on ikävää se, että)**

<p><i>Writing:</i> words are written differently than spoken (sanat kirjoitetaan eri tavalla kuin sanotaan) it is difficult to write (sitä on vaikea kirjoittaa)</p> <p><i>Difficult to learn:</i> one does not learn it immediately (sitä ei opi heti) one does not learn everything so easily (ettei opi kaikkea niin helposti) it is not so easy to learn (sitä ei opi kovin helposti) difficult to learn (vaikea opetella) on the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade there might be a lot of English homework (3-luokalla siitä tulee ehkä paljon läksyjä) there are difficult words (siinä on vaikeita sanoja) it is so difficult to pronounce it (sen ääntäminen on niin vaikeata)</p> <p><i>Not knowing it:</i> one does not understand it if one does not know English (ettei sitä ymmärrä, jos ei osaa englantia) if one doesn't understand it, one does not know what they are speaking (jos ei osaa ei ymmärrä mitä ne puhuu)</p> <p><i>Other:</i> not everyone knows it (kaikki ei osaa sitä)</p>	<p><i>Writing:</i> writing in English is so difficult (englanniksi kirjoittaminen on niin vaikeata) the words are pronounced differently than written (ne sanat lausutaan eri lailla kuin kirjoitetaan) it is written differently than pronounced (se kirjoitetaan erilailla kun lausutaan)</p> <p><i>Difficult to learn:</i> sometimes it is difficult (se on joskus vaikeaa) it takes time to learn (oppimisessa menee aikaa) it is difficult and it is slow to learn (se on hankalaa ja sitä oppii hitaasti) one does not know it without learning (sitä ei osaa ilman opettelua) one has to remember those words (pitää muistaa ne sanat) there are so many difficult words (siinä on niin paljon vaikeita sanoja) one has to learn many words (pitää opetella monta sanaa) one has to remember so much (pitää muistaa niin paljon)</p> <p><i>Other:</i> nothing (2) (ei mikään)</p>
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The students had already on the 2<sup>nd</sup> grade some expectations about English language. For instance, they expected it to be difficult to pronounce and they knew that English words are written differently than they are spoken. Two students mentioned also that it was not nice that one did not understand what others were speaking without the knowledge of English. On the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade all students' answers had to do with difficult aspects of English, except two students answering that there was nothing dull about English language. Difficulty to write English was mentioned three times, remembering the vocabulary or remembering in general was mentioned to be difficult by four students and four students mentioned English to be difficult in general.

### 5. The English language sounds like (Englannin kieli kuulostaa)

<p><i>Positive:</i></p> <p>fun (2) (hauskalta); entertaining (viihdyttävältä)</p> <p>easy (helpolta)</p> <p>nice and fast (kivalta ja nopealta)</p> <p>good (hyvältä)</p> <p><i>Negative:</i></p> <p>weird (3) (oudolta); a little bit weird to me (vähän oudolta mun korvaan); at first weird (aluksi oudolta)</p> <p>confusing (sekavalta)</p> <p>difficult (vaikealta)</p> <p><i>Neutral:</i></p> <p>different than Finnish (erilaiselta kuin suomen kieli)</p>	<p><i>Positive:</i></p> <p>fun (2) (hauskalta)</p> <p>nice (2) (kivalta; mukavalta); quite nice (ihan kivalta)</p> <p>a bit weird and interesting (oudolta vähän ja kiinnostavalta)</p> <p><i>Negative:</i></p> <p>weird (4) (oudolta); at first weird, after studying not so much (ensiksi oudolta kun opiskelee ei niinkään)</p> <p>complicated (monimutkaselta); difficult (vaikealta)</p> <p>pig Latin (siansaksalta)</p> <p><i>Neutral:</i></p> <p>like Dutch (hollannilta)</p>
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The English language sounded *nice* and *fun* to a group of students both on the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> grade. It sounded also *easy*, *nice and fast* and *good* on the 2<sup>nd</sup> grade, and *a bit weird and interesting* on the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade. However, there were five students both on the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> grade that thought English sounded *weird*. However, Finnish word *outo* has both meanings of *weird* and *strange* or *unfamiliar*. It might be that children use this word in order to describe something unknown to them rather than something that is actually odd.

On the 2<sup>nd</sup> grade English was seen also as *confusing* and *difficult*. However, on the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade it was also seen as *complicated*, *difficult* and like *pig Latin*. The amounts of positive and negative descriptions were more or less the same both on the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> grade: there were six positive descriptions and seven negative descriptions on the 2<sup>nd</sup> grade, and six positive descriptions and eight negative descriptions on the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade. Neutral descriptions were that English sounds *different than Finnish* (2<sup>nd</sup> grade) and *like Dutch* (3<sup>rd</sup> grade).

#### 6. With the English language I am able to (Englannin kielellä osaan)

<p><i>Speak:</i> speak (puhua) speak abroad (puhua ulkomailla)</p> <p><i>Computer or games:</i> things that have to do with computer games (peleihin liittyviä juttuja (siis tietsikkapelit)) to use the computer (käyttää tietokonetta)</p> <p><i>A specific example:</i> greet (tervehtiä) count 0-12 (laskea nolasta kahteentoista); count to 10 (laskea kymmeneen) order an ice tea (tilata Ice Tean) get food in a foreign country (hankkia ruokaa vieraassa maassa) say “do’h” (Simpsons) (sanoa “do’h” (Simpsonit)) sing Happy Birthday etc. (laulaa Happy Birthday mm.) say “dog” (sanoa koira) “my name is X” (my name is X)</p> <p><i>Other:</i> nothing (ei mitään)</p>	<p><i>Speak:</i> speak (4) (puhua) speak a little bit and order drinks (puhua vähän ja tilata juomia) speak a little bit (puhua vähän) speak in foreign countries (puhua vieraissa maassa) help English people in Finland (auttaa englantilaisia Suomessa)</p> <p><i>Computer or games:</i> play games (pelata pelejä); play (pelata)</p> <p><i>A specific example:</i> order a hamburger (tilata hampparin) buy ice cream (ostaa jäätelöä)</p> <p><i>Other:</i> quite much (aika paljon) words, sentences (sanoja, lauseita) invent new words (keksiä uusia sanoja)</p>
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On the 2<sup>nd</sup> grade many students offered specific examples of their existing knowledge of English: they reported knowing greetings, numbers, names of food, songs, or specific phrases or words. Two students mentioned being able to use some English with the computer or games, and two students mentioned speaking. On the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade the number of specific examples was significantly reduced. Two students mentioned games. Eight students mentioned to be able to speak with English language. Speaking seems to be the first activity that students associate with English language. Other aspects of language - writing, reading and listening - were not mentioned in any of the answers.

### 7. With the English language I am not able to (Englannin kielellä en osaa)

<p><i>Speaking and pronunciation:</i> speak (2) (puhua); to speak and pronounce (puhua ja ääntää)</p> <p><i>Other:</i> read well (hyvin lukea) make sentences (tehdä lauseita) every single word (kaikkia yksittäisiä sanoja) play (leikkiä)</p> <p><i>A specific example:</i> curse (kiroilla) pronounce alphabets (lausua aakkosia) negotiate prices with people (neuvotella ihmisten kanssa hinnoista) say “tree” (sanoa puu) say “water” (sanoa vesi) not more than 2 songs (kuin 2 laulua)</p>	<p><i>Speaking and pronunciation:</i> say difficult words (sanoa vaikeita sanoja) say everything yet (vielä sanoa kaikkea) pronounce everything (lausua kaikkea) pronunciation is difficult (lausuminen on vaikeaa) speak well (puhua hyvin)</p> <p><i>Other:</i> read fluently / write fluently (lukea sujuvasti / kirjoittaa sujuvasti) quite much (aika paljon) (not) everything (2) (kaikkea) explain all things (selittää kaikkia asioita)</p> <p><i>A specific example:</i> curse (kiroilla) days of the week (viikonpäiviä) word “poor” (köyhä sanaa) buy anything, it goes wrong immediately (ostaa mitään, se menee heti väärin)</p> <p><i>Other:</i> I cannot answer this question (sorry) (En osaa vastata tähän kysymykseen. (Sori))</p>
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On the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade 33% of the students answered speaking or pronunciation when asked what they were not able to do with English language. Pihko (2007: 92-94) found out in her study of 15-year-old students that pronunciation skills are essential to the student's self-confidence in using English. The poorer the student believes their pronunciation skills to be; the more nervous they are to speak English. Girls seem to be nervous about speaking more often than boys. The students in this study seem to generally have an obvious interest in speaking English. When asked what was nice about English language, many answers were connected with speaking English and communicating. Speaking was also mentioned various times as an answer to the question what students were able to do with English language. Thus students have confidence in their speaking abilities and in the light of these answers it seems likely that they consider precisely pronunciation to be difficult. Thus teaching pronunciation thoroughly and with right methods seems significant in order to support students' initial enthusiasm to speak the foreign language.

#### **Part 14**

##### **Draw here what comes to your mind about English language**

Drawing seemed to be an activity that divided children. Some of them had clearly spent time and effort on their drawing whereas others had not drawn anything. Seven students had drawn something both on the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> grade. One student had not drawn anything but there was a text on both grades informing what he would have drawn if he had wanted to draw or was not too tired after answering the questions. Three students had drawn something only on the 2<sup>nd</sup> grade, and two students only on the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade. Two students did not draw anything on either grade. There seems to be a division by gender as it comes to a drawing exercise. Out of seven students who drew something on both grades, five were girls. Both students who did not draw anything on either grade were boys, as was the student who provided only text instead of a drawing. Although the number of students in this study is small, it seems likely that drawing exercises are preferred by girls more than boys.

The students' drawings on the 2<sup>nd</sup> grade:



FIGURE 25. A student's drawing on the 2<sup>nd</sup> grade

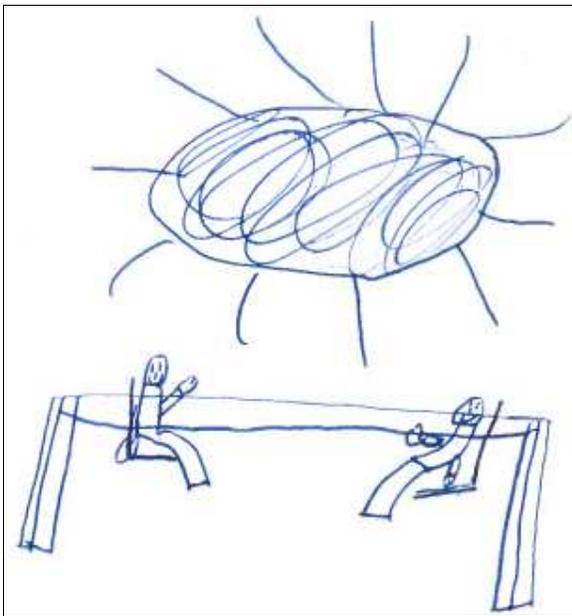


FIGURE 26. A student's drawing on the 2<sup>nd</sup> grade

On the 2<sup>nd</sup> grade there were two pictures that seem to represent travelling. In the first picture this is clear: there is a boat and a text *lomamatkat* (English: *holiday trips*). The second picture might be a ski lift, and the people look happy in the picture.



FIGURE 27. A student's drawing on the 2<sup>nd</sup> grade

The acronym of the international football association with an exclamation mark shows an interest towards football, and an association between the English language and football.

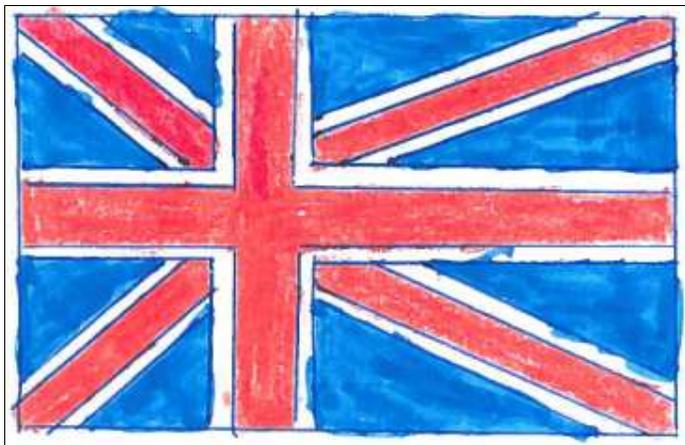


FIGURE 32. A student's drawing on the 2<sup>nd</sup> grade

This student drew the flag of the United Kingdom.

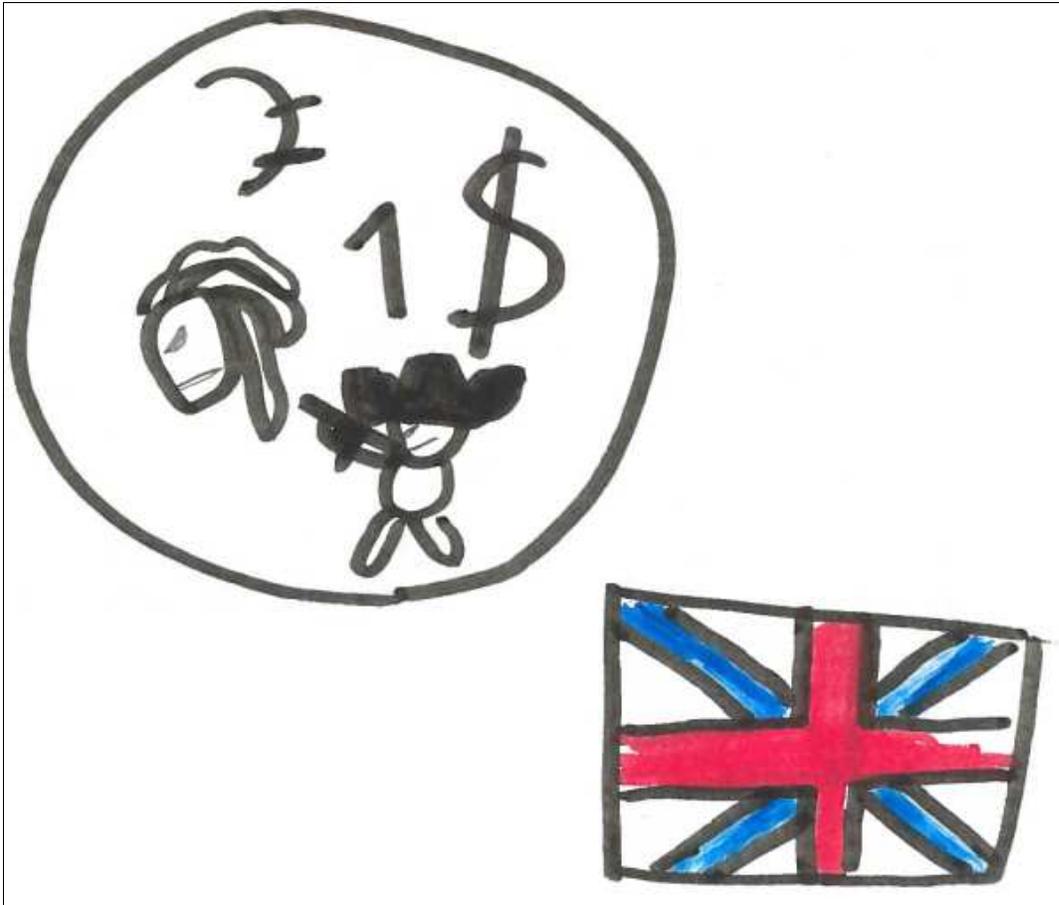


FIGURE 28. A student's drawing on the 2<sup>nd</sup> grade

In this drawing there is the map of the United Kingdom and a circle in which are “1”, “€”, “\$”, a gunman and another man. The circle could refer to a game or a movie, or possibly something else.

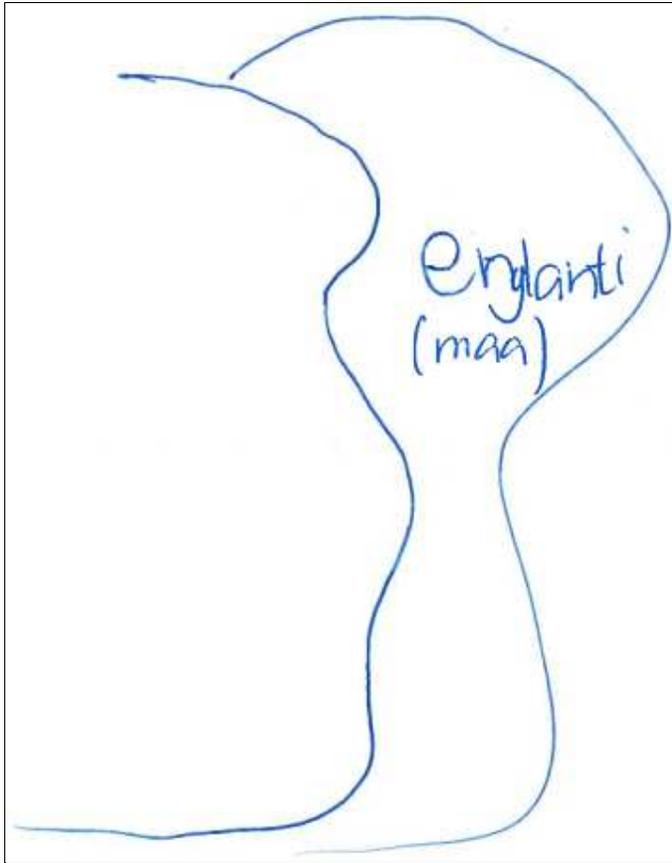


FIGURE 29. A student's drawing on the 2<sup>nd</sup> grade

This student drew a map of the United Kingdom with the text *englanti (maa)* (English: *england (country)*).

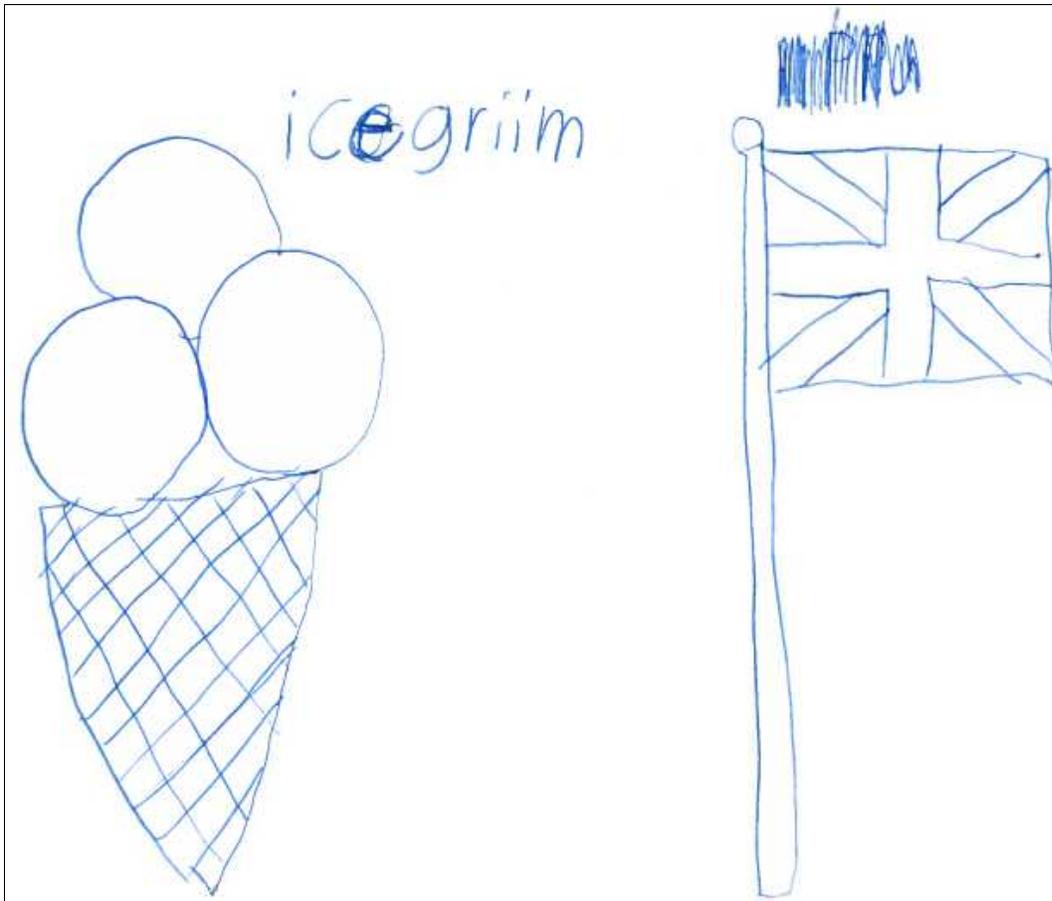


FIGURE 30. A student's drawing on the 2<sup>nd</sup> grade

This student's drawing is an ice cream cone with the text *icegriim* and the flag of the United Kingdom. Probably *ice cream* is a word that the student knows in English and thus wants to draw it.

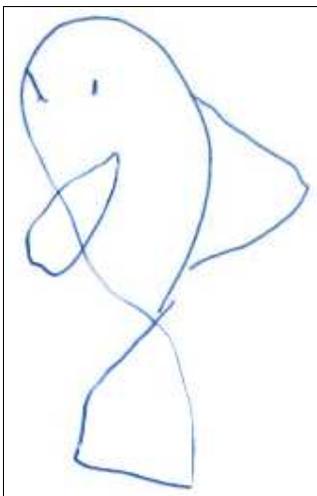


FIGURE 33. A student's drawing on the 2<sup>nd</sup> grade

A fish was drawn by one student. The association between the English language and the fish remains unclear and cannot be concluded from the drawing. However, there might be a clear connection between them for the student.

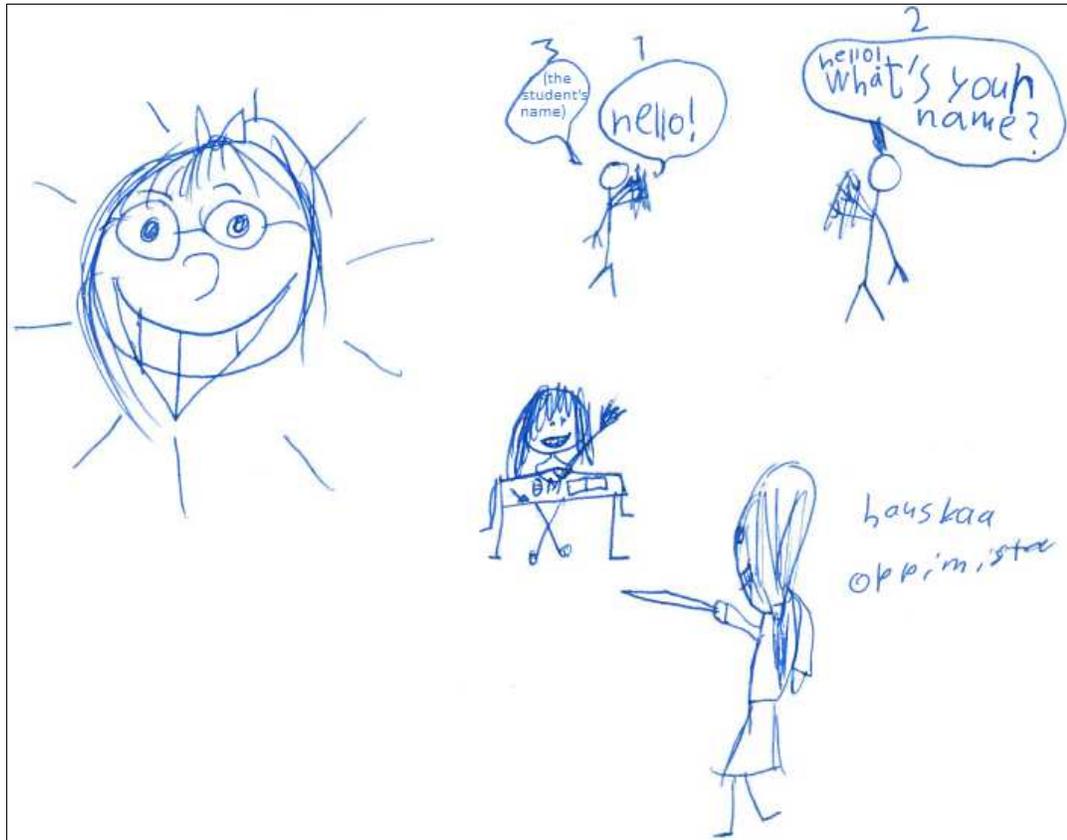


FIGURE 31. A student's drawing on the 2<sup>nd</sup> grade

This student drew a happy face, a small conversation in English and a classroom situation with a text *hauskaa oppimista* (English: *fun learning*). The drawing seems to represent positive attitude towards learning English.

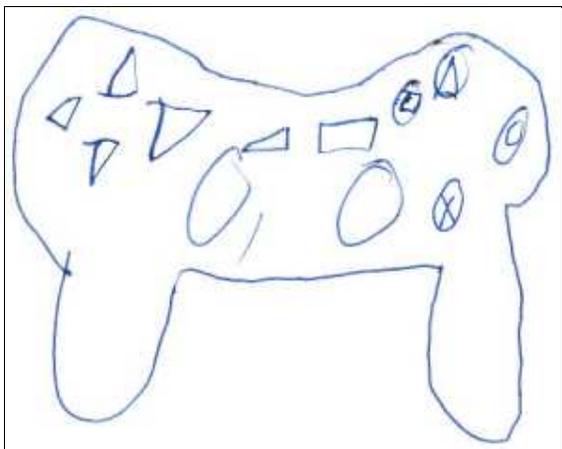


FIGURE 34. A student's drawing on the 2<sup>nd</sup> grade

A game console controller shows that the student sees a clear connection between the English language and console games.

Ten students made a drawing on the 2<sup>nd</sup> grade. On the 2<sup>nd</sup> grade the most common drawing had to do with the flag of the United Kingdom that was drawn three times. A map of the United Kingdom was drawn once and the student who did not want to draw would have drawn English people. There was a text explaining that: *English people come to his mind although they are quite normal anyway. He didn't want to draw. (Tulee mieleen kuulema englantilaisia ihmisiä, vaikka ne ovat kuitenkin aika tavallisia. Ei halunnut piirtää.)* Travelling was represented in two drawings, one of a boat and another one of two happy people who might be on a ski lift. Football and game console controller were both presented in one drawing. Other drawings were about ice cream, a fish, possibly a sheriff and a criminal, and a picture with happy faces, English talking persons and an English lesson. Some students seem to have drawn something that they knew how to say in English: ice cream or the phrases about asking the name.

The students' drawings on the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade:

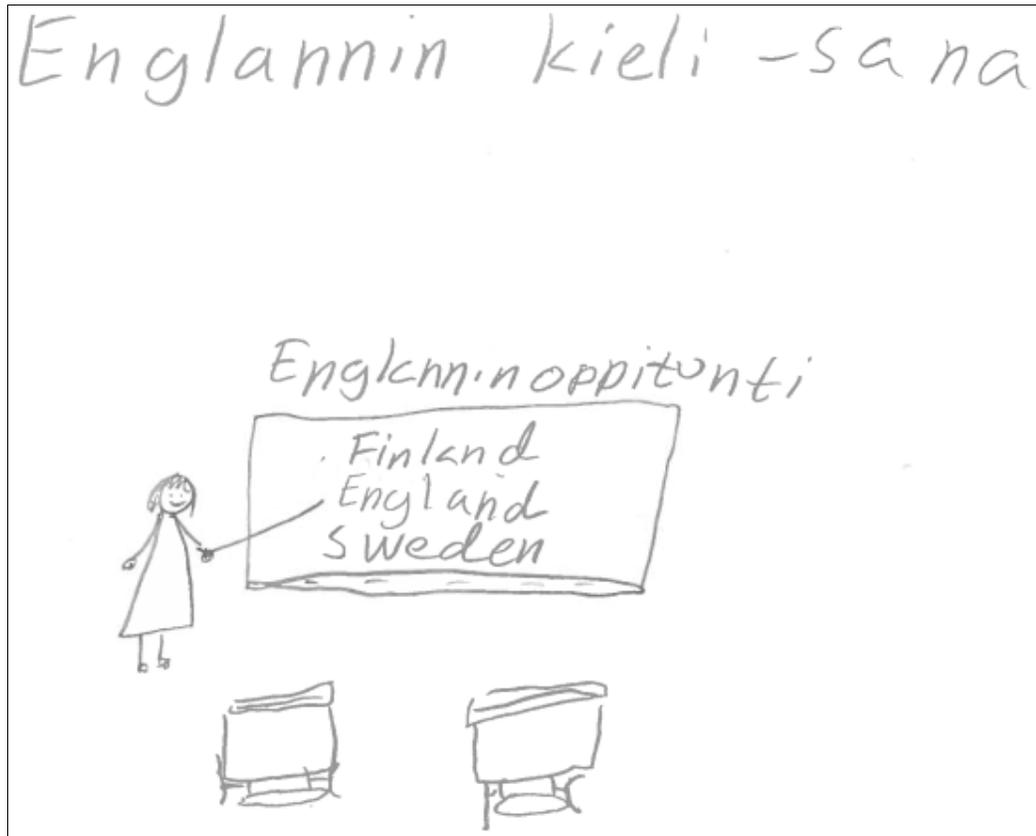


FIGURE 35. A student's drawing on the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade

This drawing shows a clear connection with school environment, and the texts make this even clearer: *Englannin oppitunti* (English: *English lesson*), *Englannin kieli -sana* (English: *the word English language*)

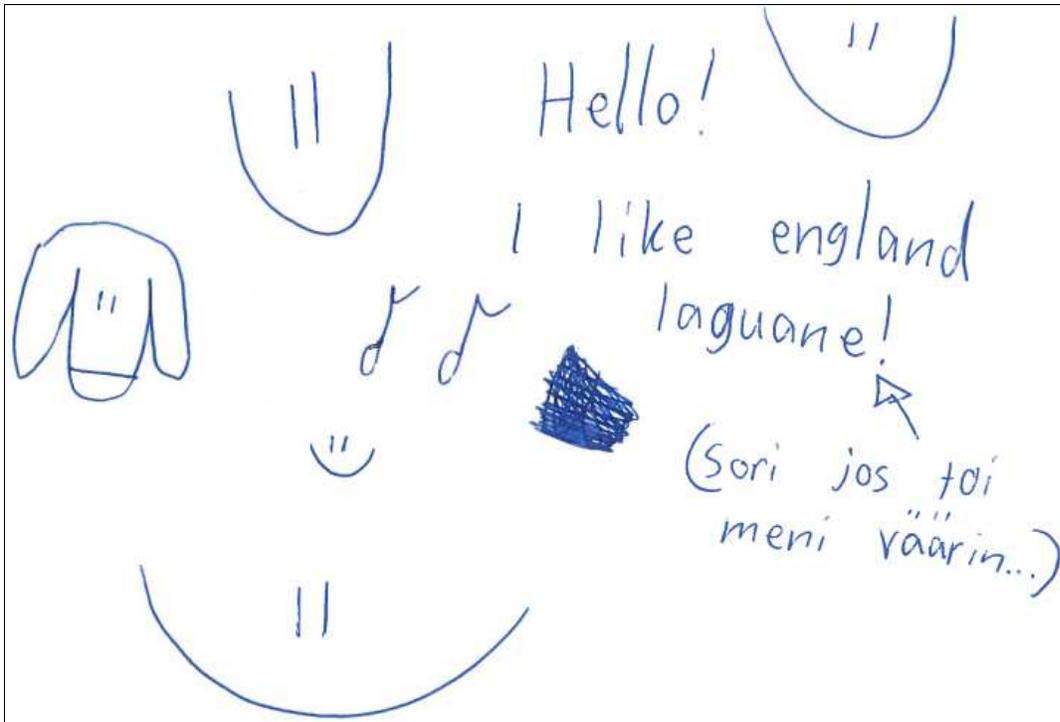


FIGURE 36. A student's drawing on the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade

This drawing is quite happy with many smiling faces, a dog, musical notes and a text “Hello! I like england laguane! (Sori jos toi meni väärin...)” (English: *Sorry is that went wrong...*).

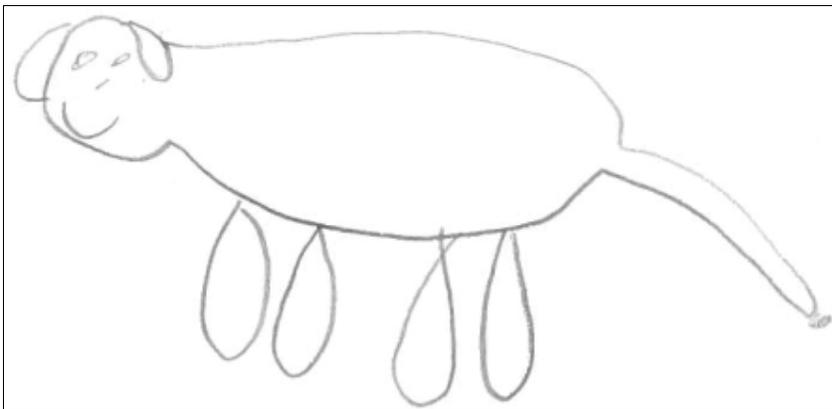


FIGURE 41. A student's drawing on the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade

This drawing represents an animal. There might be a connection with the English language if, for instance, the student remembers the English word (e.g. dog) well.

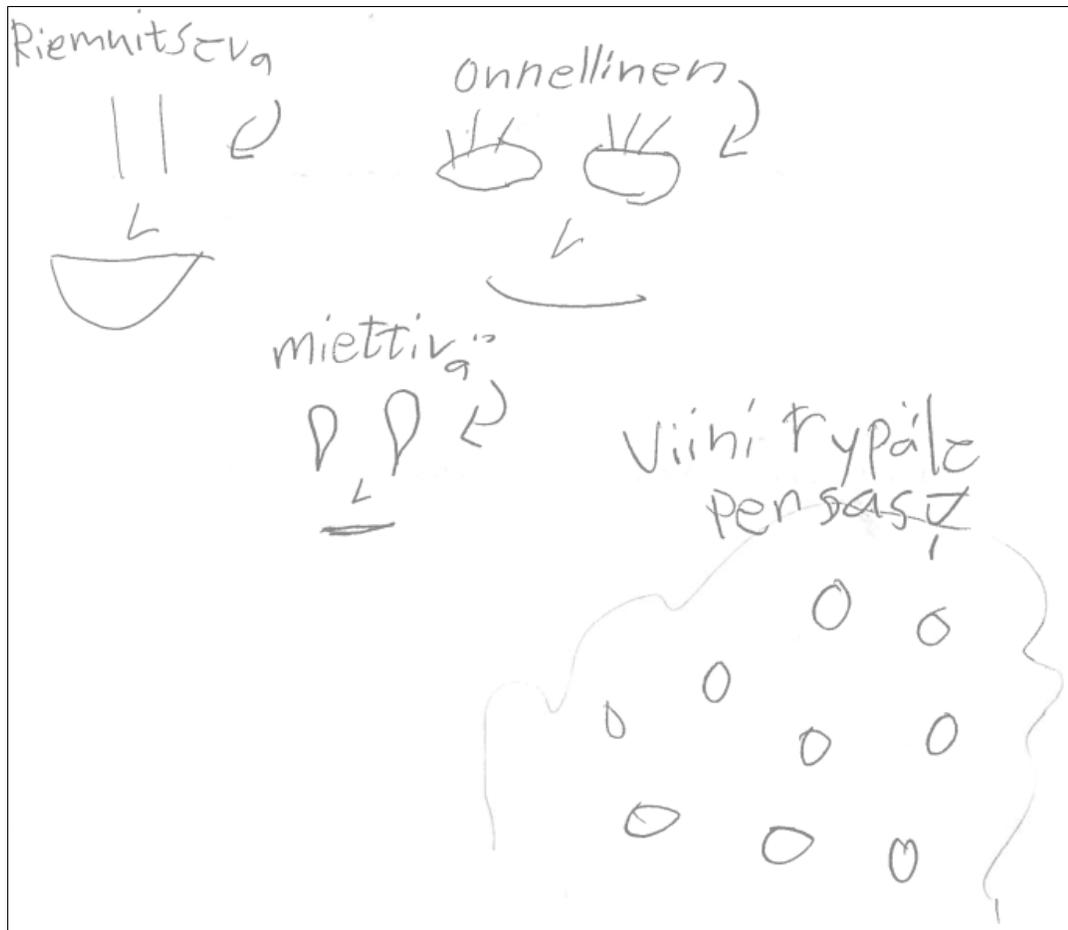


FIGURE 37. A student's drawing on the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade

In this drawing there are faces with texts *riemuitseva* (English: *jubilant*), *onnellinen* (*happy*) and *miettivä* (*thoughtful*). There is also a bush with the text *viinirypäle pensas* (*a grape bush*).

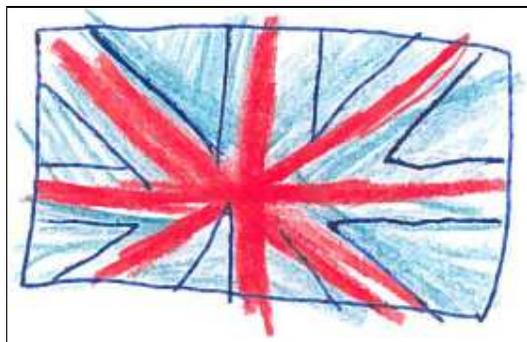


FIGURE 40. A student's drawing on the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade

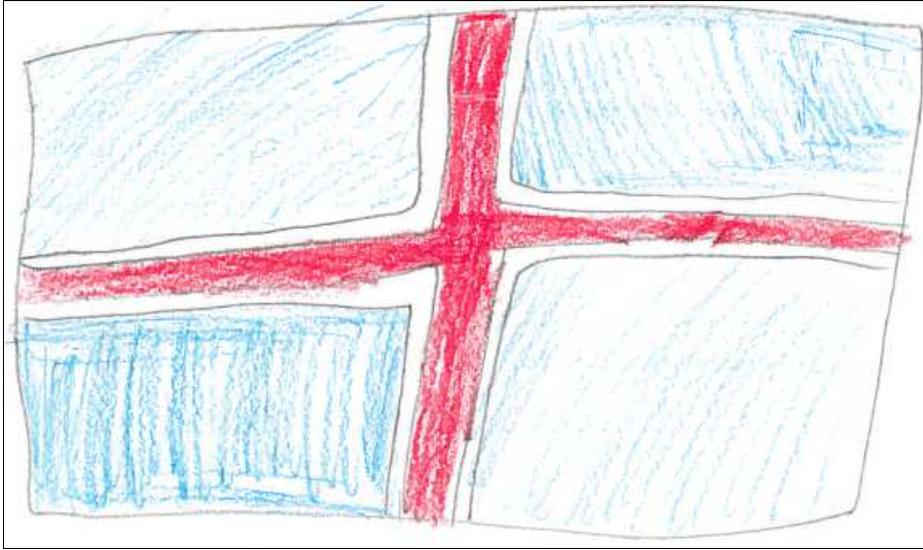


FIGURE 38. A student's drawing on the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade

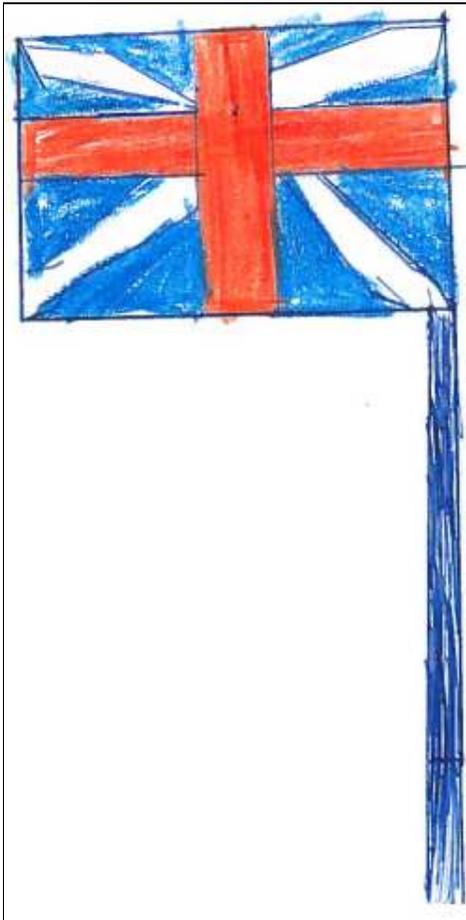


FIGURE 39. A student's drawing on the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade

Three students drew the flag of the United Kingdom.

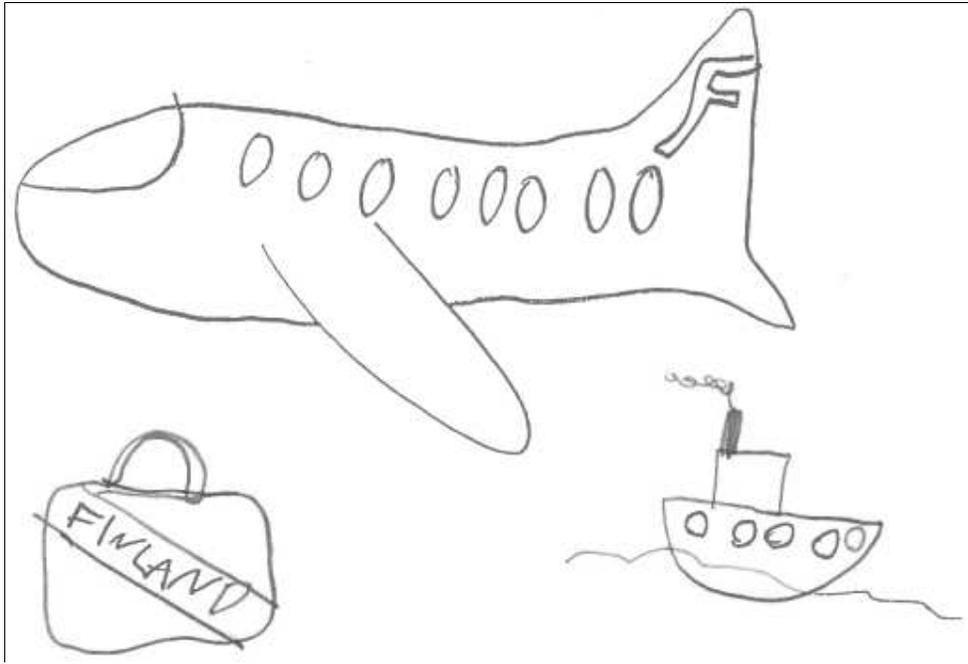


FIGURE 42. A student's drawing on the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade

This drawing is associated with travelling with an airplane, a suitcase with the text *Finland* and a boat.



FIGURE 43. A student's drawing on the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade

This drawing with a football player shows an interest in football and a connection that the student has with the English language and football.

Nine students made a drawing on the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade. Also on the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade the most common drawing was the flag of the United Kingdom which was drawn three times. It would have been drawn also by the student who did not draw anything, as was written by his parent: *He thought immediately of the English flag but didn't have the energy to draw it; the questions took their toll on him. (Tuli mieleen heti Englannin lippu, muttei*

*jaksanut piirtää, kysymykset ottivat koville.*) Travelling was represented in one drawing of an air plane, a boat and a suitcase with a text *Finland*. Football was present in a drawing of a boy with a football. School was presented in one drawing where there was an English lesson with the teacher and a blackboard and English words. One student drew an animal which is probably a dog. One student had made a variety of drawings: smileys, a dog, musical notes and a written text “*Hello! I like England laguane!*” (*Sori jos toi meni väärin...* [English: Sorry if that went wrong]). Another student had drawn three different faces, each with a Finnish text *riemuitseva* (= jubilant), *onnellinen* (= happy) and *mieltivä* (= thoughtful), and a bush with a Finnish text *viinirypälepensas* (= a grape bush).

School or some aspects of the school were present in many of the answers to previous questions in this study. However, when students were asked to draw, only one of them did a drawing that had to do straightforwardly with the school or English lessons. Thus the drawing exercise provided slightly different answers than other questions. However, the influence of English lessons could be seen in the drawings of the flag of the United Kingdom which was commonly drawn by the students. They have probably drawn the flag in their English class at some point.

One problem with the drawings has to do with the interpretation of them. Most drawings were quite straightforward: for instance a drawing with an air plane, a boat and a suitcase is likely to mean that the student was thinking about travelling when drawing. However, some drawings may have more possible interpretations. For instance, the drawing with possibly a sheriff and a criminal could mean the student was thinking about a certain game, a TV show or a movie, or something completely different when drawing. Other drawings may seem impossible to interpret as the drawing of a fish. The same student had answered *fish* also on the question about what comes to her mind when she hears the words *the English language* so it seems likely that there is a connection for her between a fish and English. It could be that it is a word she remembers well in English, or there might be a different connection that is impossible to guess through the information provided by this study.

Some students had a strong association with a certain issue. One boy drew “Fifa!” on the 2<sup>nd</sup> grade, and the football player on the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade. One girl drew a boat on the 2<sup>nd</sup> grade, and an airplane, a boat and a suitcase on the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade. For these students the

associations with football and travelling seem to have stayed the same on both grades. For some students the difference between the grades was more significant. The girl who drew a happy face, English phrases and the phrase *hauskaa oppimista* (English: *fun learning*) on the 2<sup>nd</sup> grade, simply drew the flag of the United Kingdom on the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade.

The attitudes represented in the drawings are positive or neutral. The faces in the drawings are smiling and the drawings represent issues that are probably seen as positive by the students, such as travelling, football, and playing games. Many pictures are somehow neutral, representing the flag of the United Kingdom, for instance. However, it should be taken into account that some students did not draw anything and it is possible that the students with positive associations were more likely to make a drawing than the students with negative associations.

### **5.5 The relation between the students' use of English in their free time and their attitudes to English**

The possible connection between the students' free time activities and their attitudes towards English was analysed by comparing the students' answers about their free time activities with English and their answers to the five questions (Part 3) about their attitudes towards learning English and hearing or using English in their free time. These questions were answered on the scale not at all (0) - very (3), and the total numbers used here are the sum of the five numbers, 15 being thus the highest possible total number. Higher total number means more positive attitudes towards English. The highest possible number for free time activities is 19 which was the number of the options provided in Part 1. The connection between students' free time activities and their attitudes towards the English language are only tentative. Naturally, based on this data, it is not possible to conclude if free time activities concerning English would have had an effect on the students' attitudes. Other factors may have affected the attitudes more significantly.

## The 2<sup>nd</sup> graders' free time activities and positive attitudes about the English language

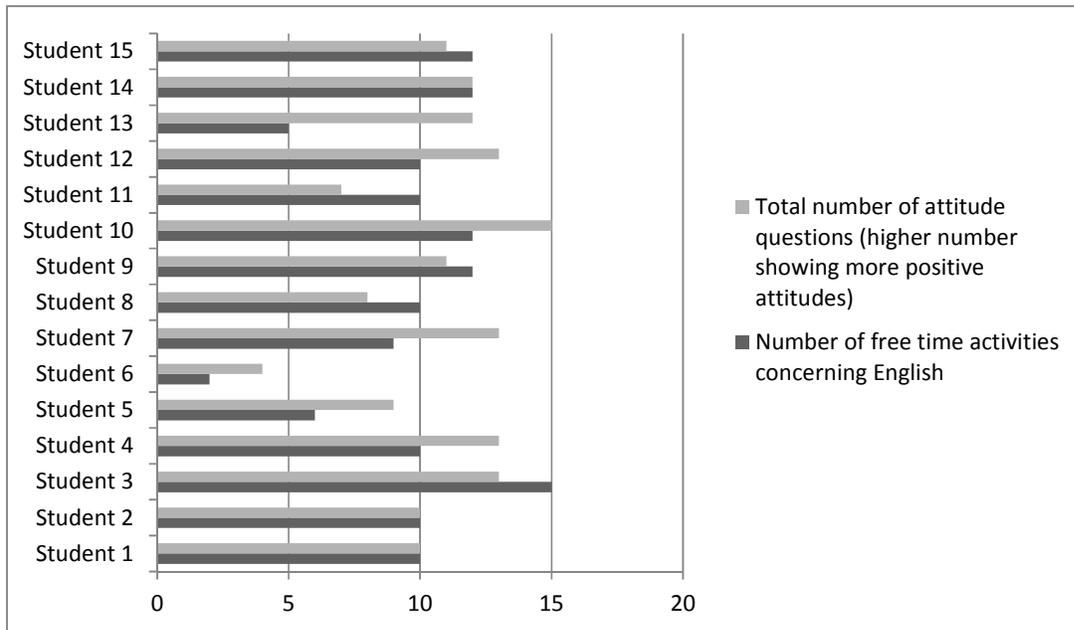


FIGURE 44. The 2<sup>nd</sup> graders' free time activities and positive attitudes towards the English language

On the 2<sup>nd</sup> grade, there seems to be some correlation between certain students' free time activities and their attitudes about the English language. The student involved with the smallest number of free time activities concerning English (Student 6) is also the student with the least positive attitudes about English. However, the correlation is not straightforward with all students. For instance, the student with the second lowest number of free time activities (Student 13) is among the seven students with the most positive attitudes. Based on these results, among the 2<sup>nd</sup> graders it is more likely to have positive attitudes about English even with less free time activities concerning English, than to have a lot of free time activities but negative attitudes.

### The 3<sup>rd</sup> graders' free time activities and positive attitudes towards the English language

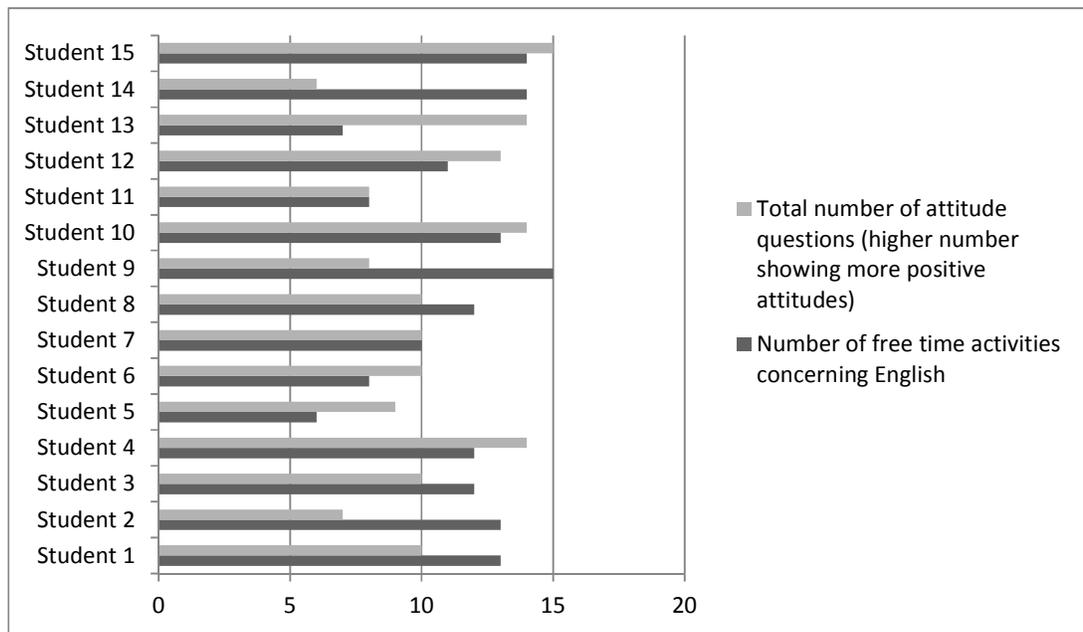


FIGURE 45. The 3<sup>rd</sup> graders' free time activities and positive attitudes towards the English language

On the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade, the correlation between free time activities and attitudes seems to be more complex than on the 2<sup>nd</sup> grade. There are students with a lot of free time activities concerning English but with less positive attitudes, and students with fewer free time activities but with positive attitudes. What is significant in these tentative results is that in the cases when the free time activities and positive attitudes were not congruent, on the 2<sup>nd</sup> grade the student was more likely to have more positive attitudes even though they used less English in their free time. On the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade the situation was more even: there were students with positive attitudes who did not use as much English in their free time, and also students who had more negative attitudes towards English despite using a lot of English in their free time. There seems to be some general correlation with the free time use of English and positive attitudes towards English language. However, this does not apply to all students. Some students have positive attitudes although they do not use English much in their free time and vice versa.

All the students, except one, engaged in more free time activities on the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade than on the 2<sup>nd</sup> grade. As mentioned before in this study, students' attitudes towards English

language were slightly more negative on the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade than on the 2<sup>nd</sup> grade. Thus it is natural that on the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade there are students who use more English although they have more negative attitudes. It might be that on the 2<sup>nd</sup> grade the students' attitudes are more affected by free time activities since they may be the only contact the student has with English. On the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade, the school may have a significant role as it comes to the attitudes. Thus the students who may be actively involved with English in their free time activities, may still have negative attitudes about learning English at school.

## **5.6 The parents' influence on the children's attitudes**

As mentioned before in the section about the background of the parents, most parents had relatively positive attitudes towards English. All but one of them thought learning English was very important. Their opinions about using English themselves were more varied, and not all of them liked using English. However, around 80% of the parents agreed to some extent or completely with the statements that using English is easy for them and that they like to use English.

Only one student had a parent who thought learning English was not that useful – for him it was only of “little” importance. The students' other parent thought learning English was very important. On the 2<sup>nd</sup> grade this student thought learning English was only a little important, and on the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade she thought it was somehow important. It is possible that the parent's opinion may have had an influence on the student's opinion. However, on the 2<sup>nd</sup> grade 25% of the students had the opinion that learning English was only a little important, and the other students who shared this opinion had parents who thought that learning English was very important. Moreover, in general this student's attitudes towards English are neutral or positive.

One student had parents who thought learning English was very important, but they did not use much English neither at work nor in free time, and both of them completely disagreed about the ease and liking of the use of English. This student did not have very positive attitudes towards the English language on the 2<sup>nd</sup> grade: at that time he thought learning English was important only “a little” and it was only “a little” pleasant to start learning English or to hear English in free time. However, he expected that learning

English would be relatively easy, and answered that it would be relatively nice to use English in free time. His attitudes got more positive on the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade, when he answered that learning English was relatively important and relatively nice and easy. However, hearing or using English in his free time was only “a little” pleasant for him. The student did not think that English is really needed in Finland. However, in total, his answers were not significantly negative compared with other students; rather, they were more neutral than negative. It is possible, but not certain, that the parents’ dislike of using English has had some effect on the student’s opinions.

One student’s both parents disagreed to some extent with the statements about the ease and pleasantness of using English. However, they did regard learning English as very useful. This student had very positive attitudes about English both on the 2<sup>nd</sup> and especially on the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade. Especially her drawing was extremely positive on the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade, with smiling faces and the phrase in English stating that she likes the English language.

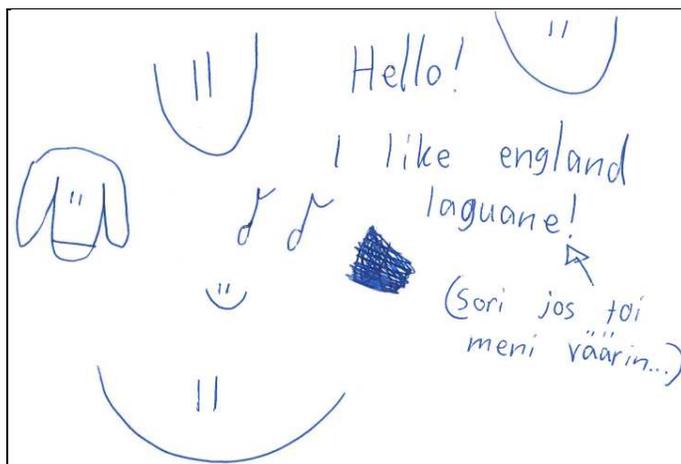


FIGURE 46. The student’s drawing on the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade

The student who had the most negative attitudes towards English language on the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade, and whose opinions had changed most negatively between the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> grade, has parents who both have studied English for 12 or 14 years. They also agreed to some extent or completely that they like to use English, and both agreed to some extent that using English is easy for them. One of them uses English a little at work and some amount in free time, whereas the other parent uses a lot of English at work and a little in free time.

The student who had the most positive attitudes towards the English language on the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade, has parents who are positive about English. One of them agreed completely with both the easiness and liking to use English, whereas the other one agreed to some extent with both statements. They have learned English at least for 10 years, and they use English at work and in free time some amount or a little.

Based on the information provided by this study, it is not possible to make any conclusions about the parents' influence on their children's attitudes. However, for the purpose of providing some examples, the results of a few individual students were presented here, and, on the basis of these cases, it seems evident that there is no straightforward connection that parents with positive attitudes would have a child with positive attitudes, or that parents with negative attitudes would have a child with negative attitudes. One issue that should be taken into account is also that, although some parents did not personally like using English that much, all but one of them thought that learning English was very important. Thus they were likely to see learning English as important for their children, no matter if their own experiences of learning and using it are positive or negative. Besides parental influence on children's attitudes, there are various other factors that have an influence, such as the personality and capabilities. Especially on the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade when they are studying English at school, factors such as the teacher, student's experiences at English lessons and opinion of their peers are likely to have a strong influence on their attitudes. Thus the parents are likely to have some impact on their children's attitudes towards English but the extent of this impact can vary due to various reasons.

### **5.7 Individual students with negative or positive attitudes**

Two students were chosen to be reported as examples of negative or positive attitudes. One of them had the most negative and the other one the most positive attitudes on the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade, according to Part 3 of the questionnaire, in which there were five questions about attitudes towards studying English and hearing or using English in free time. All of their responses both on the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> grade are reported and discussed.

### **5.7.1 The student with the most negative attitudes on the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade**

The student who had the most negative attitude towards English on the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade was chosen as an example of a student with negative attitudes. Her negativity showed, in particular, in Part 3 of the questionnaire which included questions about studying English and hearing or using English in free time. She was also the student whose opinions had changed the most negatively from the 2<sup>nd</sup> grade to the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade.

#### ***5.7.1.1 The background of the student***

The student's parents speak Finnish as their mother tongue. Both of them have learned English for 12 years or more, and have learned Swedish, too. In addition, one of them has learned Spanish. Both of them have had a higher level education. Both of them think that learning English is very useful. One of them uses English a little at work and to some extent in free time, and agrees to some extent with the statement that using English is easy, and completely with the statement that it is agreeable. The other one uses English a lot at work and a little in free time, and agrees to some extent with the statement that using English is easy and agreeable. The student is the middle child in the family with one younger and one older sibling. On the 2<sup>nd</sup> grade she had been abroad more than five times. She had not lived abroad or attended English day care in Finland. In her day care or school groups there had not been children who did not speak Finnish. The child has a cousin abroad, and the family has foreigners as family friends in Finland. The family has an Internet connection and a TV but not a game console.

#### ***5.7.1.2 The use of English***

On the 2<sup>nd</sup> grade the student chose 12 out of the 19 options about free time activities concerning English language. She watched English TV shows and movies, listened to English music and sang English songs. She read English magazines or books and played English computer games. She watched videos on English web sites, and visited other English web sites. She had spoken in English with foreigners, had heard English abroad, and had learned English from her parents, siblings or other relatives. She also saw or

heard English for instance in TV commercials. On the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade the student chose 14 out of the 19 free time activities mentioned in the questionnaire. She chose all of the options that she chose on the 2<sup>nd</sup> grade, except on the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade she did not choose seeing or hearing English for instance in TV commercials. Compared to the 2<sup>nd</sup> grade, there were three new free time activities: playing English console games (*Sims*) and online games, and using English with Finnish friends. Besides the given options, on the 2<sup>nd</sup> grade she reported hearing or using English at the house of relatives and at home, and on the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade at home.

### **5.7.1.3 Attitudes towards English**

The student had quite positive views about studying English at school. On the 2<sup>nd</sup> grade she thought learning English at school was very important and very nice, and on the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade she still thought it was somehow important and somehow nice. However, it does not seem to be the easiest subject for her: on the 2<sup>nd</sup> grade she expected learning English to be somewhat difficult, and on the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade she answered the same. Hearing and using English in free time is where her answers changed the most from the 2<sup>nd</sup> to 3<sup>rd</sup> grade. On the 2<sup>nd</sup> grade she thought it would be relatively nice to hear English in free time, whereas on the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade she did not consider that nice at all. On the 2<sup>nd</sup> grade she thought it would be very nice to use English in free time but on the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade she thought it would be only minimally nice. Thus all of her answers changed into more negative ones between the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> grade, except for the question about easiness to study English which stayed the same.

On the 2<sup>nd</sup> grade she thought the most important reason to study English was that if she would go abroad, she would be able to speak there. On the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade she answered that the most important reason for studying English was to speak with foreigners.

If I go to a different country I could speak different country. (2<sup>nd</sup> grade) (Jos menen erimaahan osaisin puhua eri maata.)

One can speak with foreigners. (3<sup>rd</sup> grade) Voi puhua ulkomaalaisten kanssa.

With respect to the question in which situations it would be nice for her to be able to use English, her answers differ a lot on the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> grade. The communicative factor that

was seen as important by her on the 2<sup>nd</sup> grade was replaced by playing games on the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade.

We are going to have an au pair who only speaks English. It would be nice to be able to speak with him/her. (2<sup>nd</sup> grade) (Meille tulee au pair joka puhuu vain englantia, olisi kiva osata jutella sen kanssa.)

In games. (3<sup>rd</sup> grade) (Peleissä.)

On both grades she thought English was needed in Finland. Her reasons for this were the following:

Because there are foreigners also in Finland. (2<sup>nd</sup> grade) (Koska Suomessakin on ulkomaalaisia.)

For studying. (3<sup>rd</sup> grade) (Opiskeluun.)

On the 2<sup>nd</sup> grade she completely agreed that she would like to hear or use more English in free time. On the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade she more or less disagreed with the statement. On the 2<sup>nd</sup> grade she believed to learn English as much at school as in free time, whereas on the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade she thought she would learn it more at school. When hearing the words *the English language*, three things that came into her mind were on the 2<sup>nd</sup> grade *something wonderful (jotain ihanaa)*, *irritating (harmillista)* and *so wonderful that my tummy hurts (niin ihanaa että sattuu mahaan)*. On the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade she answered *dog (koira)*, *au pair (au pairi)* and *English (englanti)*. On the 2<sup>nd</sup> grade she described English language as *funny (hassu)*, *weird (outo)* and *strange (kummallinen)*. On the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade she described it as *pig Latin (siansaksaa)*, *difficult (hankalaa)* and *unusual (epätavallista)*. For the question about what the English language is used for, she answered the following:

It is spoken like we speak Finnish. (2<sup>nd</sup> grade) (Puhutaan sitä niinkuin meillä suomea.)

To speak with foreigners, to speak with cousins, to socialize (or to date). (3<sup>rd</sup> grade) (Puhutaan ulkomaalaisten kanssa, puhutaan serkkujen kanssa, seurustellaan.)

For the open question what else she thought about English language, she answered *fun (hauskuutta)* on the 2<sup>nd</sup> grade and *nothing (ei mitään)* on the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade. For the question where sentences were completed with own words, her answers were the following.

*The English language is learning (opettelevaa)* (2<sup>nd</sup> grade) / *important (tärkeää)* (3<sup>rd</sup> grade).

*For me the English language is a little bit difficult (vähän vaikeaa)* (2<sup>nd</sup>) / *difficult (hankalaa)* (3<sup>rd</sup>).

*It is nice about the English language that it makes me laugh (se naurattaa) (2<sup>nd</sup>) / we are allowed to fool around on English lessons (enkuntunnilla saadaan pelleillä) (3<sup>rd</sup>).*

*A bad thing about the English language is that if you do not know it, you do not understand what they speak (jos ei osaa ei ymmärrä mitä ne puhuu) (2<sup>nd</sup>) / it is difficult and slow to learn (se on hankalaa ja sitä oppii hitaasti) (3<sup>rd</sup>).*

*The English language sounds different than the Finnish language (erilaiselta kuin suomen kieli) (2<sup>nd</sup>) / like pig Latin (siansaksalta) (3<sup>rd</sup>).*

*With English I am able my name is X (my name is X) (2<sup>nd</sup>) / to invent new words (keksiä uusia sanoja) (3<sup>rd</sup>).*

*With English I am not able to say water (sanoa vesi) (2<sup>nd</sup>) / the word poor (köyhä sanaa) (3<sup>rd</sup>).*

When asked to draw what comes to her mind about English language, on the 2<sup>nd</sup> grade she drew a sun and two people sitting maybe on a ski lift or a swing, and on the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade an animal which is probably a dog. The people and the dog are all smiling and seem happy. Thus the pictures seem to show quite positive attitude about English.

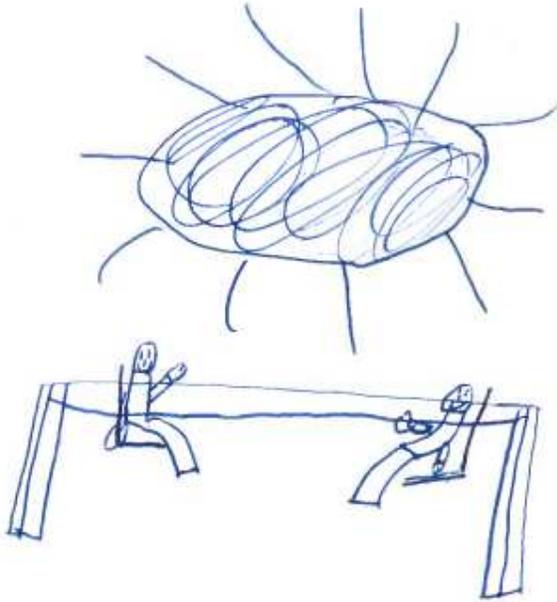


FIGURE 47. The student's drawing on the 2<sup>nd</sup> grade

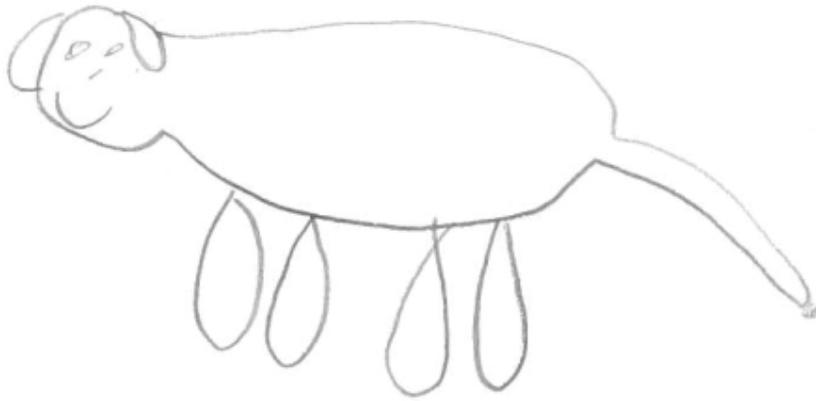


FIGURE 48. The student's drawing on the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade

Of all the students, this student had the most negative attitudes about English on the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade. However, in many ways her attitudes are not that negative. She has a lot of free time activities connected with English language. She thinks English is important and needed also in Finland. She also thinks that learning English at school is somehow nice. It seems that learning English is not the easiest for her, and this may have influenced her answers in general. On the 2<sup>nd</sup> grade some of her answers gave the impression that she was excited to start learning English as English was *so wonderful that her tummy hurt*, whereas on the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade her answers were generally more neutral or negative. The difficulty to learn English came across in many of her answers on the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade. She answered that learning English was only a little easy, and her three words to describe English language were *pig Latin*, *difficult* and *unusual*. When she was asked to complete sentences, she answered that for her the English language was difficult, it was unpleasant about the English language that it was difficult and slow to learn, and it sounds like pig Latin. It seems that her attitudes might be an example of a phenomenon that will be discussed later on in the part of Discussion: an initial enthusiasm and a positive orientation towards English before starting to learn it at school generally wears off due to various reasons, such as the compulsory nature of English and the fact that learning it requires a significant amount of effort.

### 5.7.2 The student with the most positive attitudes on the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade

This student was chosen as an example of a student with positive attitudes towards English. He had the most positive attitudes towards English on the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade according

to the questionnaire's Part 3 with questions about studying English and hearing or using English in free time. His answers had also changed quite positively between the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> grade.

### **5.7.2.1 Background of the student**

His parents speak Finnish as their mother tongue. Both of them have learned English for 10 years or more, and have also learned Swedish. In addition, one of them has learned Russian. One of them has had a higher level education and the other a secondary level education. Both of them think that learning English is very useful. One of them uses English to some extent both at work and in free time, and agrees completely that using English is easy and agreeable. The other one uses English only a little at work and in free time and agrees to some extent with the statement that using English is easy and agreeable. The student is the youngest child in the family with one older sibling. On the 2<sup>nd</sup> grade he knew some words of English. He had been abroad more than five times. He had not lived abroad or attended English daycare in Finland. In his daycare or school groups there had not been children who did not speak Finnish. The family has no relatives abroad, but they have English speaking family friends in Finland. The family has an Internet connection, a TV and a game console.

### **5.7.2.2 The use of English**

On the 2<sup>nd</sup> grade the student chose 12 out of the 19 options about free time activities concerning English language. He watched English TV shows (*Simpsons*, series) and movies, and listened to English music. He played English computer games (*Need for Speed*), console games (*Need for Speed Carbon*) and online games. He watched videos on *Youtube*, and visited other English web sites naming web sites about frisbee and remote-controlled cars. He had spoken in English with foreigners, had heard English abroad, and had learned English from his parents, siblings or other relatives. He also saw or heard English for instance in TV commercials. On the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade the student chose 14 out of the 19 free time activities. He chose the same 12 options than on the 2<sup>nd</sup> grade, and also reported singing English songs and flipping through English comics which he named to be *Uncle Scrooge*. As English TV shows he reported series, movies and reality TV. *Hitman* was named as an example of computer games, and as a console

game he reported playing *Mafia II*. He did not report other uses of English besides the given options on neither grade.

### 5.7.2.3 Attitudes towards English

On both grades he thought learning English was very important. On the 2<sup>nd</sup> grade he expected learning English to be relatively nice and easy, and on the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade he thought it was very nice and easy. On the 2<sup>nd</sup> grade he thought hearing and using English in free time would be relatively nice, whereas on the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade he thought it was very nice. In his opinion, the most important reason to study English was to communicate with other people on the 2<sup>nd</sup> grade and to manage abroad on the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade.

Communication with other people. (2<sup>nd</sup> grade) (Kommunikointi muiden ihmisten kanssa.)

To manage abroad. (3<sup>rd</sup> grade) (Pärjää ulkomailla.)

On the 2<sup>nd</sup> grade he thought it would be nice for him to be able to use English abroad, for instance in shops, and when the children of family friends were speaking English with their own relatives. On the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade he thought it would be nice to be able to help foreigners who are visiting Finland.

Abroad e.g. in shops, when the children of family friends are speaking English with their own relatives. (2<sup>nd</sup> grade) (Ulkomailla esim. kaupoissa, kun tuttavaperheen lapset puhuvat enkkua omille sukulaisilleen.)

To help foreigners who are visiting Finland. (3<sup>rd</sup> grade) (Auttaa ulkomaalaisia, jotka vierailevat Suomessa.)

On both grades he thought English was needed in Finland. On the 2<sup>nd</sup> grade the reason for this was that there are a lot of English speaking people in Finland. On the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade the reasons were foreigners, Internet and games.

There are a lot of English speaking people here. (2<sup>nd</sup> grade) (Täällä on paljon englanninkielisiä.)

Foreigners, online, games. (3<sup>rd</sup> grade) (Ulkomaalaiset, verkossa, peleissä.)

On both grades he agreed more or less that he would like to hear or use more English in his free time. On both grades he believed to learn English more at school than in free time. On the 2<sup>nd</sup> grade the words *the English language* brought into his mind *foreign*

*countries (ulkomaat), foreigners (ulkomaalaiset) and games (pelit).* On the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade three things were *foreign countries (ulkomaat), English lessons (englannin tunnit) and London (Lontoo).* On the 2<sup>nd</sup> grade he thought the English language was *common (yleinen), OK (OK), and it can be used anywhere (voi käyttää kaikkialla).* On the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade he thought it was *nice (mukava), useful (tarpeellinen) and easy (helppo).* On the 2<sup>nd</sup> grade he thought English language was used for speaking (*puhutaan*), and on the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade for playing (*pelataan*).

For the question where sentences were completed with own words, his answers were the following:

*The English language is OK (OK) (2<sup>nd</sup> grade) / nice (mukavaa) (3<sup>rd</sup> grade).*

*For me the English language is quite important (aika tärkeää) (2<sup>nd</sup>) / easy (helppoa) (3<sup>rd</sup>).*

*It is nice about the English language that it is possible to communicate with many people (voi kommunikoida monien ihmisten kanssa) (2<sup>nd</sup>) / it is easy to learn (sitä on helppo oppia) (3<sup>rd</sup>).*

*A bad thing about the English language is that (it is) difficult to learn (vaikea opetella) (2<sup>nd</sup>) / one does not know it without learning it (sitä ei osaa ilman opettelua) (3<sup>rd</sup>).*

*The English language sounds a bit weird to me (vähän oudolta mun korvaan) (2<sup>nd</sup>) / weird (oudolta) (3<sup>rd</sup>).*

*With English I am able to use the computer (käyttää tietokonetta) (2<sup>nd</sup>) / to speak (puhua) (3<sup>rd</sup>).*

*With English I am not able to speak and pronounce (puhua ja ääntää) (2<sup>nd</sup>) / to explain everything (selittää kaikkia asioita) (3<sup>rd</sup>).*

When asked to draw what comes to his mind about English language, he drew a game console controller on the 2<sup>nd</sup> grade, and nothing on the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade.



FIGURE 49. The student's drawing on the 2<sup>nd</sup> grade

Games and Internet come across in many of his answers. On the 2<sup>nd</sup> grade he associated the words ‘the English language’ with games and he drew a game console controller. He also completed the sentence “*With English language I am able...*” with “*to use the computer*”. On the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade he thought English was needed in Finland for Internet and games, and the English language was used for playing. Since one important source for motivation to learn languages is the possibility to use acquired language skills in everyday life, it could be that this student is motivated and interested in English at least partly due to playing games in which English is useful. He also reported various free time activities where he heard or used English, and the family had English speaking family friends. His answers on the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade seem to show that English is quite easy for him to learn since that came across in four of his answers, three of which were questions where own words were used for answers. He considered learning English to be very easy and one of the words he used to describe English was *easy*. To complete sentences he described that for him English was *easy*, and it was nice about English language that it was *easy to learn*. To conclude, it seems that the student’s positive attitude towards English might be due to the ease of learning it and seeing the immediate use for it in his everyday life when playing games.

## 6. DISCUSSION

In general, most students seem quite neutral in their attitudes. However, especially on the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade there are a few students who have significantly positive attitudes and a few students who have significantly negative attitudes. The general difference that appears in the students’ answers between the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> grade is that the appeal of English has diminished to some extent. Edmondson and House (2003) talk about the initial enthusiasm towards foreign language learning that may cause a positive orientation towards English before starting to learn it at school. Students may look forward to learning the language for various reasons. For instance, they may be motivated to understand English music that they listen to, or they may already be familiar with many English words and expressions that they look forward to using more. This initial enthusiasm generally wears off over the first two or three years as the language loses its novelty and initial attraction. Reasons for this may be, among others, the development of different interests outside of media-oriented youth culture, the discovery that learning

a foreign language requires a significant amount of effort and persistence, and demotivating teachers or uninspiring teaching materials. The compulsory nature of English may also be a source of demotivation. On the other hand, recognizing the potential uses of English outside the classroom, an interest in English media, and communicative experiences of using English may be significant in order to sustain the enthusiasm towards the language. (Edmondson and House 2003: 331-333) It seems likely that the reasons mentioned by Edmondson and House to be possible causes of demotivation may have been causes of demotivation for students in this study. On the other hand, the students who have positive attitudes towards English may have been influenced by their various English free time activities as this study proved that the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> graders have various potential uses of English outside the school.

Students have various connections with the English language due to their free time activities. They have various free time activities already on the 2<sup>nd</sup> grade and the number of English free time activities has increased on the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade. However, there are differences between students as it comes to the number of their English free time activities and some students use more English on their free time than others. There seems to be some connection between students' free time activities and their attitudes towards English but this connection is not straight-forward, as some students practice a lot of English free time activities and have more negative attitudes towards English, whereas some students do not practice many English free time activities but have more positive attitudes. Since the motivation to learn a language is stronger if children can use it in their own surroundings, the use of English in their free time is an important factor. Interestingly, based on the answers in this study, it seems that although the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> graders have various contacts with English language in their free time and everyday life in Finland, they still tend to connect the use of English to be with foreigners and when travelling abroad. Although some students answered that English was needed for games or studying, the majority of the students were likely to think of travelling abroad and speaking with foreigners or tourists. The answers also show that the motivation of the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> graders is based mostly on the first and second circle of motivation (Edmondson and House 2003: 334) discussed before: the initial excitement about the learning situation and using English in free time, for instance through media. The last circle was represented in the answers that recognized the importance of English as a major world language, as the importance of English as an international language that can be used in various countries came across in many answers. However, the

usefulness of learning English for the future studies or employment was not represented in the answers, as only one student answered that English was needed for studying.

The parents of the students had different opinions about using English, and not all of them liked to use it. However, the majority of them liked using it, and, more significantly, practically all of them thought learning English was very important. This study presented some cases of possible connections between the student's attitudes and their parents' attitudes but there were not any straightforward connections found in this study, and conclusions cannot be made based on these results. Parental influence is likely to be one factor influencing the children's attitudes towards the English language. However, there are certainly other factors that have an influence on the students' attitudes. For instance, the difficulties in learning English came across in many answers on the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade, and the experiences of learning English at school are likely to impact the students' attitudes.

This is a small-scale study consisting of fifteen students, and thus the results cannot be generalized but the students are rather presented as examples of 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> grade students. In addition to the small number of participants in the study, the sample for this study is not random enough in order for it to be generalized. Although the questionnaire was originally sent out to all the students of a certain grade in a specific school, the final study consists of 28% of these students. Since answering the questionnaire was completely voluntary and answering it required some time and energy, it should be taken into account that the families who returned the questionnaire might have generally more favourable attitudes towards English and more interest in the subject since they had the motivation to answer the questionnaire. Since the study consisted of young students and completing the questionnaire required also the help of a parent or parents, it is likely that the parents' motivation to fill out the questionnaire was essential in order for it to take place. A larger study with more random subjects would be needed in order to have results that could be generalized.

As the research was done with young children, many issues may have influenced their answers: for instance, their mood on the day of the questionnaire or misunderstanding some questions. As the questionnaires were filled out at home by the students with the help of their parents, the presence of the parents may have influenced the answers. On the other hand, filling out the questionnaire at home may have enabled the students to

fill in also negative aspects without the fear of displeasing the teacher or the researcher. An obvious disadvantage of filling the questionnaires at home was that there was no possibility to ask the children to explain themselves when their answer was unclear or ambiguous. For instance, the child may have had a clear idea in her mind as she answered *fish* to the question “*What things come into your mind when you hear the words English language?*”. However, without any further explanation offered by the child it is not possible to explain validly why the child associates the English language with a fish, or if it is possibly a random word that the child has used only in order to fill in the requirement of three words for this question. The same child also drew the fish so it seems likely there was some connection for her but this does not offer any further explanation about the meaning of *fish* for this student. As Greig and Taylor (1999: 64) point out, children may reply in an unpredictable way and give an inventive or a comic answer that has no logical relation to the question. Thus it is difficult to interpret if the answer has an actual connection with the English language or not.

One issue that came across in the drawing of a certain student is that when doing research with school children they may see the questionnaire as a test or as something that is connected with the school. This might have been the case with the student who wrote a sentence in English and then wrote “*Sori jos toi meni väärin...*” (English: *Sorry if that went wrong...*). Young students might feel like they are answering a test and thus it is essential to emphasize the fact that there are no right or wrong answers to the questions. Filling out the questionnaire at home with the parents was supposed to reduce the possibility of viewing the questionnaire as a test, but the answer of this particular student shows that it might still be the case.

The information provided by this study is relevant mainly to teachers and possibly to parents as well. Teachers may find new ways or ideas that they can apply in the classroom and the knowledge of their students’ possible English free time activities can help them in assuming what is their capability of learning English. Some children may use English significantly in their free time and thus they may learn it informally outside the school. Thus it would be useful for teachers to be aware that some children may already have some knowledge of English when they start learning it formally at school. Teachers could take into account what the students already know. They could also plan activities that are connected with the students’ free time activities or encourage students to use more English in their free time based on the most common free time activities of

the age group. Teachers could also benefit from the knowledge of the attitudes of children towards the English language and how the attitudes change when they start to learn English. One observation in this study was that the girls' attitudes seemed to get slightly more negative between the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> grade, whereas the boys' attitudes became slightly more positive after starting to learn English at school. This could also be an interesting topic for further studies.

To the Finnish society the study might also be interesting since it gives some information about how young children spend time on Internet and use other media. Media can affect young children and their world view and thus it is important for their parents and the society at large to be aware of the ways young children use it. The study is useful for the research community since the issue of using English and attitudes towards English have been studied previously with different age groups and contexts. The age groups of the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> graders provide information about the early years of language education and the attitudes that are present at the starting point of the English studies. The presence of the English language in Finland is a very current topic and English will certainly continue to be important in Finland, as well as in other countries.

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## APPENDICES

### Appendix 1. Questionnaire for the 2<sup>nd</sup> graders

Hei!

Olen Jyväskylän yliopiston englannin kielen opiskelija. Teen pro gradu –tutkielmaani 2. ja 3. luokkalaisten vapaa-ajan englannin kielen kontakteista sekä asenteista englannin kieltä kohtaan. Tutkimukseni on kaksivaiheinen. Tässä ensimmäisessä vaiheessa tutkin lapsenne suhdetta englannin kieleen ennen kuin hän aloittaa englannin opiskelun koulussa ensi syksynä. Tutkimuksen toinen vaihe toteutetaan joko joulukuussa 2012 tai alkuvuodesta 2013, kun lapsenne on jo opiskellut englantia syyslukukauden ajan.

Toivoisin apuunne, niin että vastaatte nyt tähän kyselyyn ja varaudutte vastaamaan kyselyn toiseen vaiheeseen joulukuussa tai alkuvuodesta 2013. Kysely sisältää kaksi osiota: ensimmäinen osio on suunnattu teille lapsen huoltajana/huoltajina, ja se sisältää myös muutamia taustakysymyksiä lapsenne liittyen. Toinen osio on suunnattu lapsellenne ja toivoisin, että voitte täyttää tämän osion yhdessä lapsenne kanssa.

Osallistuminen tutkimukseen on täysin vapaaehtoista. Tutkimuksen tulokset julkaistaan pro gradu –tutkielmassani siten, ettei yksittäistä tutkittavaa voi tunnistaa. Teillä ja lapsellenne on oikeus saada lisätietoa tutkimuksesta minulta missä vaiheessa tahansa. Teillä on myös oikeus jälkikäteen perua aineiston käyttöoikeus. Jos haluatte kysyä jotain tutkimukseen liittyen, voitte ottaa yhteyttä sähköpostitse x@x.x tai puhelimitse xxx-xxxxxxx.

**Lomakkeen voi palauttaa luokanopettajalle tiistaihin 22.5.2012 mennessä.**

Iso kiitos ajastanne!

Ystävällisin terveisin Veera Määttä

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**Annan suostumukseni siihen, että lapseni voi osallistua tähän tutkimukseen.**

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#### *päivämäärä ja huoltajan allekirjoitus*

Pyydän teitä ilmoittamaan yhteystietonne, jotta voin toimittaa teille myös kyselyni toisen osan joulukuussa 2012 tai alkuvuodesta 2013. Oma ja lapsenne henkilöllisyys ei kuitenkaan tule ilmi missään vaiheessa tutkimuksen raportoinnissa.

**1. KYSELY LAPSEN HUOLTAJALLE/HUOLTAJILLE**

*Toivon tähän osioon vastauksia lapsen molempia huoltajia koskien, jos mahdollista.*

**1.A) 1. huoltajan vastaukset:**

Sukupuoli: nainen / mies

Äidinkielenne: \_\_\_\_\_

Osaamanne muut kielet: \_\_\_\_\_

Koulutusaste: peruskoulu \_\_\_\_\_ toinen aste \_\_\_\_\_ korkea-aste \_\_\_\_\_

Mitä teette työkseenne: \_\_\_\_\_

Montako vuotta olette opiskellut englantia? \_\_\_\_\_

Käytättekö työssänne englantia? paljon / jonkin verran / vähän / en ollenkaan

Käytättekö vapaa-aikananne englantia? paljon / jonkin verran / vähän / en ollenkaan

Onko englannin opiskelu mielestänne hyödyllistä? paljon / jonkin verran / vähän / ei ollenkaan

Onko englannin käyttö itsellenne helppoa? täysin eri mieltä / jokseenkin eri mieltä / jokseenkin samaa mieltä / täysin samaa mieltä

Onko englannin käyttö itsellenne mieluista? täysin eri mieltä / jokseenkin eri mieltä / jokseenkin samaa mieltä / täysin samaa mieltä

**1.B) 2. huoltajan vastaukset:**

Sukupuoli: nainen / mies

Äidinkielenne: \_\_\_\_\_

Osaamanne muut kielet: \_\_\_\_\_

Koulutusaste: peruskoulu \_\_\_\_\_ toinen aste \_\_\_\_\_ korkea-aste \_\_\_\_\_

Mitä teette työkseenne: \_\_\_\_\_

Montako vuotta olette opiskellut englantia? \_\_\_\_\_

Käytättekö työssänne englantia? paljon / jonkin verran / vähän / en ollenkaan

Käytättekö vapaa-aikananne englantia? paljon / jonkin verran / vähän / en ollenkaan

Onko englannin opiskelu mielestänne hyödyllistä? paljon / jonkin verran / vähän / ei ollenkaan

Onko englannin käyttö itsellenne helppoa? täysin eri mieltä / jokseenkin eri mieltä / jokseenkin samaa mieltä / täysin samaa mieltä

Onko englannin käyttö itsellenne mieluista? täysin eri mieltä / jokseenkin eri mieltä / jokseenkin samaa mieltä / täysin samaa mieltä

**1.C) Taustakysymykset lasta koskien:**

Lapsen sukupuoli? tyttö / poika

Lapsen sisarusten iät: \_\_\_\_\_

Lapsen äidinkieli? \_\_\_\_\_

Lapsen osaamat muut kielet? \_\_\_\_\_

Lapsi on käynyt ulkomailla: ei koskaan / 1-2 kertaa / 3-5 kertaa / useammin

Onko lapsi asunut toisessa maassa? (missä, kuinka kauan, minkä ikäisenä?)

\_\_\_\_\_

Onko lapsi käynyt koulua toisessa maassa? (missä, kuinka kauan, minkä ikäisenä?)

\_\_\_\_\_

Onko lapsi käynyt englanninkielistä päiväkotia tai kerhoa Suomessa, minkä ikäisenä ja kuinka kauan?

\_\_\_\_\_

Onko lapsen päiväkotiryhmässä, kerhossa tai koululuokassa ollut lapsia, jotka eivät puhu suomea?

\_\_\_\_\_

Onko lapsella sukulaisia ulkomailla, ketä ja missä?

\_\_\_\_\_

Onko perheellänne ulkomaisia perheystäviä Suomessa, mistä maasta?

\_\_\_\_\_

Onko kotonanne Internet kyllä / ei

TV kyllä / ei

pelikonsoli kyllä / ei

**2. KYSELY LAPSELLE (TÄYTETÄÄN YHDESSÄ HUOLTAJAN KANSSA)**

Hei!

Aloitat ensi syksynä koulussa englannin kielen opiskelun. Toivoisin Sinun miettivän nyt sitä, missä kaikkialla näet, kuulet tai käytät englantia vapaa-ajallasi, sekä mitä ajattelet englannin kielestä tällä hetkellä. Näihin kysymyksiin ei ole oikeita tai vääriä vastauksia, vaan minua kiinnostaa tietää mitä juuri sinä ajattelet. Vastauksistasi on minulle tosi iso apu! ☺

Terveisin Veera Määttä

## 1. Mitä näistä teet vapaa-ajallasi?

	kyllä	en	
katson englanninkielisiä tv-ohjelmia			jos kyllä, mitä? _____
katson englanninkielisiä elokuvia			_____
kuuntelen englanninkielistä musiikkia			_____
laulan englanninkielisiä lauluja			_____
selailen englanninkielisiä sarjakuvia			mitä? _____
selailen englanninkielisiä lehtiä tai kirjoja			mitä? _____
pelaan englanninkielisiä tietokonepelejä			mitä? _____
pelaan englanninkielisiä konsolipelejä			mitä? _____
pelaan englanninkielisiä verkkopelejä			mitä? _____
käyn englanninkielisissä virtuaaliympäristöissä (esim.Habbo.com)			missä? _____
katson videoita englanninkielisillä sivuilla (esim. YouTube)			missä? _____
käyn muilla englanninkielisillä Internet-sivuilla			missä? _____
keskustelen englanniksi Internetissä			missä? _____
olen puhunut ulkomaalaisten kanssa englanniksi			_____
olen kuullut englantia ulkomaanmatkoilla			_____
olen oppinut englantia vanhemmilta, isosisaruksilta tai sukulaisilta			_____
käytän englantia suomalaisten kavereiden kanssa			_____
käytän englantia harrastuksissani			missä harrastuksissa? _____
näen tai kuulen englantia esim. TV-mainoksissa			_____

Olen kuullut tai käyttänyt englantia jossain muualla: ei / kyllä, missä?

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	erittäin	jonkin verran	vähän	ei ollenkaan
Miten tärkeänä pidät englannin oppimista?				
Miten mukavaa sinusta on aloittaa englannin opiskelu ensi syksynä?				
Miten helppoa arvelet englannin opiskelun olevan?				
Miten mukavaa sinusta on kuulla englantia vapaa-ajalla?				
Miten mukavaa sinusta olisi käyttää englantia vapaa-ajalla?				

Mikä on sinusta tärkein syy opetella englantia?

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Missä tilanteissa olisi kiva, jos osaisit käyttää englannin kieltä?

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Tarvitaanko sinusta Suomessa englantia? kyllä / ei ,  
miksi tai miksi ei? \_\_\_\_\_

Haluaisitko kuulla tai käyttää enemmän englantia vapaa-ajalla? täysin samaa mieltä /  
melko samaa mieltä / melko eri mieltä / täysin eri mieltä

Uskotko oppivasi englanninkieltä enemmän koulussa vai vapaa-ajalla? enemmän  
koulussa / vapaa-ajalla / yhtä paljon

Mitä asioita tulee mieleesi kun kuulet sanat englannin kieli? Sano 3 asiaa.

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Millainen kieli englanti sinusta on? Sano 3 asiaa.

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Mitä englannin kielellä tehdään?

Mitä muuta ajattelet englannin kielestä?

**Täydennä seuraavat lauseet:**

Englannin kieli on

Minulle englannin kieli on

Englannin kielessä on mukavaa se, että

Englannin kielessä on ikävää se, että

Englannin kieli kuulostaa

Englannin kielellä osaan

Englannin kielellä en osaa

**Piirrä** tähän mitä englannin kielestä tulee sinulle mieleen:

## Appendix 2. Questionnaire for the 3<sup>rd</sup> graders

Hei!

Olen Jyväskylän yliopiston englannin kielen opiskelija. Teen pro gradu –tutkielmaani 2. ja 3. luokkalaisten vapaa-ajan englannin kielen kontakteista sekä asenteista englannin kieltä kohtaan. Tutkimukseni on kaksivaiheinen. Osallistuite tutkimuksen ensimmäiseen vaiheeseen viime keväänä vastaamalla kyselyyn, joka koski lapsenne suhdetta englannin kieleen ennen kuin hän aloitti englannin opiskelun koulussa. Tutkimuksen toinen vaihe toteutetaan nyt, kun lapsenne on jo opiskellut englantia syyslukukauden ajan.

Toivoisin apuanne, niin että vastaatte nyt tähän kyselyyn. **Vastauksenne ovat minulle todella arvokkaita, koska tarvitsen vastaukset samoilta henkilöiltä kuin ensimmäisessä vaiheessa.**

Kysely on yhdenmukainen ensimmäisen vaiheen kyselyn kanssa, paitsi se ei sisällä uudelleen taustakysymyksiä teitä ja lastanne koskien. Toivoisin, että voitte täyttää kyselyn yhdessä lapsenne kanssa.

Osallistuminen tutkimukseen on täysin vapaaehtoista. Tutkimuksen tulokset julkaistaan pro gradu –tutkielmassani siten, ettei yksittäistä tutkittavaa voi tunnistaa. Teillä ja lapsellanne on oikeus saada lisätietoa tutkimuksesta minulta missä vaiheessa tahansa. Teillä on myös oikeus jälkikäteen perua aineiston käyttöoikeus.

Jos haluatte kysyä jotain tutkimukseen liittyen, voitte ottaa yhteyttä sähköpostitse x@x.x tai puhelimitse xxx-xxxxxxx.

**Lomakkeen voi palauttaa liitteenä olevassa ja valmiiksi maksetussa kuoressa 5.4.2013 mennessä.**

Iso kiitos ajastanne!

Ystävällisin terveisin Veera Määttä

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**Annan suostumukseni siihen, että lapseni voi osallistua tähän tutkimukseen.**

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### *päivämäärä ja huoltajan allekirjoitus*

Pyydän teitä ilmoittamaan yhteystietonne, jotta voin yhdistää vastauksenne ensimmäisen vaiheen vastauksiin. Oma ja lapsenne henkilöllisyys ei kuitenkaan tule ilmi missään vaiheessa tutkimuksen raportoinnissa.

**1. KYSELY LAPSELLE (TÄYTETÄÄN YHDESSÄ HUOLTAJAN KANSSA)**

Hei!

Olet nyt opiskellut koulussa englannin kieltä syyslukukauden ajan. Toivoisin Sinun miettivän nyt sitä, missä kaikkialla näet, kuulet tai käytät englantia vapaa-ajallasi, sekä mitä ajattelet englannin kielestä tällä hetkellä. Näihin kysymyksiin ei ole oikeita tai väriä vastauksia, vaan minua kiinnostaa tietää mitä juuri sinä ajattelet. Vastauksistasi on minulle tosi iso apu! ☺

Terveisin Veera Määttä

## 1. Mitä näistä teet vapaa-ajallasi?

	kyllä	en	
katson englanninkielisiä tv-ohjelmia			jos kyllä, mitä? _____
katson englanninkielisiä elokuvia			_____
kuuntelen englanninkielistä musiikkia			_____
laulan englanninkielisiä lauluja			_____
selailen englanninkielisiä sarjakuvia			mitä? _____
selailen englanninkielisiä lehtiä tai kirjoja			mitä? _____
pelaan englanninkielisiä tietokonepelejä			mitä? _____
pelaan englanninkielisiä konsolipelejä			mitä? _____
pelaan englanninkielisiä verkkopelejä			mitä? _____
käyn englanninkielisissä virtuaaliympäristöissä (esim.Habbo.com)			missä? _____ _____
katson videoita englanninkielisillä sivuilla (esim. YouTube)			missä? _____ _____
käyn muilla englanninkielisillä Internet-sivuilla			missä? _____ _____
keskustelen englanniksi Internetissä			missä? _____
olen puhunut ulkomaalaisten kanssa englanniksi			_____
olen kuullut englantia ulkomaanmatkoilla			_____
olen oppinut englantia vanhemmilta, isosisaruksilta tai sukulaisilta			_____
käytän englantia suomalaisten kavereiden kanssa			_____
käytän englantia harrastuksissani			missä harrastuksissa? _____
näen tai kuulen englantia esim. TV-mainoksissa			_____

Olen kuullut tai käyttänyt englantia jossain muualla: ei / kyllä, missä?

	erittäin	jonkin verran	vähän	ei ollenkaan
Miten tärkeänä pidät englannin oppimista?				
Miten mukavaa sinusta on opiskella englantia koulussa?				
Miten helppoa englannin opiskelu on sinulle?				
Miten mukavaa sinusta on kuulla englantia vapaa-ajalla?				
Miten mukavaa sinusta olisi käyttää englantia vapaa-ajalla?				

Mikä on sinusta tärkein syy opetella englantia?

Missä tilanteissa olisi kiva, jos osaisit käyttää englannin kieltä?

Tarvitaanko sinusta Suomessa englantia? kyllä / ei ,  
miksi tai miksi ei? -

Haluaisitko kuulla tai käyttää enemmän englantia vapaa-ajalla? täysin samaa mieltä /  
melko samaa mieltä / melko eri mieltä / täysin eri mieltä

Uskotko oppivasi englanninkieltä enemmän koulussa vai vapaa-ajalla? enemmän  
koulussa / vapaa-ajalla / yhtä paljon

Mitä asioita tulee mieleesi kun kuulet sanat englannin kieli? Sano 3 asiaa.

Millainen kieli englanti sinusta on? Sano 3 asiaa.

Mitä englannin kielellä tehdään?

Mitä muuta ajattelet englannin kielestä?

**Täydennä seuraavat lauseet:**

Englannin kieli on

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Minulle englannin kieli on

---

Englannin kielessä on mukavaa se, että

---

Englannin kielessä on ikävää se, että

---

Englannin kieli kuulostaa

---

Englannin kielellä osaan

---

Englannin kielellä en osaa

---

**Piirrä** tähän mitä englannin kielestä tulee sinulle mieleen: