

**Teachers' Perspective on Gratitude within Classroom  
Environment**

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<b>Tiivistelmä - Abstract</b> <p>The present is a qualitative research on the topic of gratitude, specifically in classroom contexts. Its main purpose is to explore potential situations where gratitude is speculated to be present within classroom activities.</p> <p>The research took place in a primary school in the city of Jyväskylä, Finland. Two different groups of this school were videotaped during one of their lesson and the material was used in stimulated recall interviews. In the stimulated recall interview, teachers gave accounts about the different grateful moments and provided information about their thoughts and possible reasons why children were grateful.</p> <p>The main results from this investigation highlight seven different areas where gratitude presumably takes place according to teachers' accounts, namely everyday routines, emotions, classroom and class tools, learning strategies, empathy, time and competence. Moreover, a complementary phenomenon named as evocative biography emerged from teacher's accounts and the data. This provides information about the children's background and reflects the interactive essence of gratitude.</p> <p>The study provides support and insight about the idea that gratitude in the school environment has meaning in its own right, thus deserving attention in order to provide suggestions on how to help students to identify, feel and express gratitude.</p>	
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# 1 Introduction

The study of gratitude has been starting to gain attention within the psychological field in the last fifteen years (Emmons, 2004; Froh, Miller & Snyder, 2007; Gulliford, Morgan, & Kristjánsson, 2013; Lambert, Graham, & Fincham, 2009; Wood, Maltby, Gillet, Linley & Joseph, 2008). Intrapersonal benefits, namely physical and mental health, satisfaction with the environment and less neuroticism (Aghababaei & Tabik, 2012; Froh et al., 2009), as well as interpersonal ones, such as group and social integration, and meaningful connections between individuals (Bono & Froh, 2009; Froh, Bono & Emmons, 2010; Froh et al., in press) denote some reasons for this interest.

Despite this recent interest, gratitude is still a concept in need of accurate definition (Gulliford et al., 2013). The concept can be described from different fields, from psychology to philosophy, which renders a more complex clarification. In the field of education, few qualitative studies had been developed regarding gratitude and its experience (Howells, 2012, 2014; Poelkeler & Kuebli, 2014). It is with these studies that the concept and the understanding of gratitude in classroom environments has started to be recognized with its own gist in the burgeoning field (Howells, 2012, 2014; Howells & Cumming, 2012). Gratitude in classroom settings seems to be an interactive and dynamic process, whereby students and teachers experience a positive feeling after the reception of a benefit or favour during everyday life. It is a conscious and active action where individuals act upon feelings toward the others within everyday routines (Howells, 2012, 2014; Howells & Cumming, 2012).

In this light, the following is a qualitative and descriptive investigation that explores the meaning of gratitude within educational environments as well as the different situations in which it is speculated to take place. By using a stimulated recall method within a primary school in Finland, the study also aims at recognizing the cultural influences that act over this process.

The research in this sense contributes to the continuous refinement of gratitude as a concept, according to the context in which it occurs. In order to achieve this, the research provides a theoretical framework where different definitions of gratitude are presented

alongside the different hypotheses regarding its development during human life. Moreover, it provides a psychological point of view about the different requirements for the experience of gratitude, while it also considers contextual, cultural and social factors in its development.

## **2 Defining gratitude**

For centuries gratitude has been recognized and valued as a human strength and as one of the main virtues of social and personal life in many different societies and cultures (Emmons & Shelton, 2002; Tudge, Freitas, Mokra, Wang & O'Brien, in press). Coupled with these, it is expressed and felt in almost all languages, cultures and societies (Bonnie & de Waal, 2004; McCullough, Kimeldorf & Cohen, 2008), while being an important issue among the major world religions (Watkins, Woodward, Stone & Kolts, 2003).

Benefits attributed to gratitude are identified in both intrapersonal and interpersonal levels. Within the intrapersonal scope, research has shown that, compared with non-grateful individuals, grateful persons develop low levels of neuroticism, less depression, enhancement of subjective well-being, greater experience of positive emotions, physical and mental health, and satisfaction with the environment, life and the self (Aghababaei & Tabik, 2012; Froh et al., 2009). Regarding interpersonal benefits, it has been acknowledged that gratitude promotes creation and maintenance of high quality relationships (Algoe, in press; Algoe, Haidt & Gable, 2008), group and social integration, trust, meaningful and strong connections between individuals and communities, cohesion and cooperation (Bono & Froh, 2009; Freitas, Pieta & Tudge, 2011; Froh et al., 2010; Froh et al., in press; Harpham, 2004).

However, despite its importance, gratitude has only recently started to gain more attention among scholars due, among other factors (for a review see Gulliford et al., 2013), to the development of the perspective of positive psychology over the past fifteen years (Emmons, 2004; Froh et al., 2007; Gulliford et al., 2013; Howells, 2012; Lambert et al., 2009; Wood et al., 2008; Wood, Maltby, Steward & Joseph, 2008). It is within this framework that the benefits and potential of gratitude started to be acknowledged, for it has



been demonstrated that gratitude interventions have the largest effects among those targeting well-being enhancement (Froh et al., 2009).

When talking about gratitude, it is first necessary to differentiate between two main points of views (Gulliford et al, 2013; Howells & Cumming, 2012). More within the areas of psychology and philosophy, the first viewpoint assumes that gratitude is related, directly or indirectly, to a benefactor's action towards the receiver, relying on human factors that prompt the feeling. It is then most commonly related to the appreciation of the helpful actions of others (Gulliford et al, 2013; Tudge et al., in press; Wood, Froh, & Geraghty, 2010). On the other hand, the second approach to gratitude recognizes not only interpersonal appreciation of others, but also non-human sources (Emmons, 2004; Froh, Sefick & Emmons 2008; Gulliford et al, 2013; McCullough, Kilpatrick, Emmons & Larson, 2001; Wood et al., 2010).

Bearing this difference in mind, it is also necessary to mention that gratitude has been linked to diverse conceptual contexts, such as emotions, morality (Emmons, 2005), attitudes and traits (Chan, 2010; Gordon, Musher-Eizenman, Holub & Dalrymple, 2004; Howells, 2014; Howells & Cumming, 2012; Lambert et al., 2009). Concerning emotions, gratitude is considered as an attribution-dependent (Emmons & Shelton, 2002), complex process experienced as a response when receiving something that was not earned. In this scope, the appraisals of the individuals about their experience of positive outcomes related to a benefit intentionally provided by some source, whether a person or non-human, are predecessors of and important for the elicitation of the feeling (Froh et al., 2010; Froh et al., 2008; McCullough et al., 2001; McCullough et al., 2008). In the context of morality it is conceived that gratitude is part of several moral operations or devices that societies have developed in order to facilitate social exchanges between individuals, whether in kinship or not; these exchanges in turn help to preserve societies and their values over the time by preventing individuals from acting destructively towards others (Freitas et al., 2011; Froh et al., 2008; Froh et al., 2010; McCullough et al., 2001; McCullough et al., 2008; Piaget, 1995). What is more, gratitude has been conceptualized as an inner attitude, which is expressed towards something or someone during the everyday life of a person (Howells, 2014). For Howells (2007; Howells & Cumming, 2012), gratitude is more an action than just feeling and thought. It is “the active and conscious practice of giving thanks” and it is

genuine when individuals are able to experience and interpret situations in life which lead to engagement and openness with our world, and, therefore, share what it has been received (Howells, 2004, p. 12). Finally, gratitude has also been conceived in the framework of traits, where processes leading to the emotion of gratitude are related to the predisposition of a given person to experience any emotion (Watkins et al., 2003). These predispositions are consistent and stable set of behaviours, ways of expression, desires, emotions and attention concerned with what is wrong or right within specific scopes of human life (Gulliford et al., 2013).

Within these aforementioned contexts, the differences in conceptualization shape methodological approaches and procedures towards the phenomena. In agreement with the two main different points of view mentioned earlier, a sociobiological point of view asserts that gratitude is an emotion that regulates individuals' responses to human altruistic actions based on a cost and benefit ratio (Trivers in Algoe, in press). A perspective more related to life dispositions regards gratitude as a "wide life orientation towards noticing and appreciating the positive in the world" (Wood et al., 2010, 891).

The present work initially agrees with the psychological perspective, which suggests that gratitude is experienced:

when Person A (the beneficiary) receives a benefit (a present, favour, or help) from Person B (the benefactor) and, recognizing that Person B acted in order to meet a need or desire of Person A, Person A feels positive towards B in return. As a result of the positive feeling associated with Person B, Person A also wishes to repay B in some way if an opportunity arises (Nelson, Freitas, O'Brein, Calkins, Leerkes & Marcovitch, 2013, p. 43).

In this line, Baumgarten-Tramer (1938), in the first research work on gratitude, developed and identified a typology of this phenomenon. According to her, there are four different types of gratitude: verbal, concrete, connective and finalistic. Verbal gratitude identified as a "thank you" reply, which can be taken as what has been taught by parents, thus not necessarily denoting the gratitude feeling, or as an overwhelming feeling expressed verbally (Baumgarten-Tramer, 1938; Freitas et al., 2011). Concrete gratitude occurs when a person wants to pay back with an object, valuable for the benefactor or not, for the benefit received (Baumgarten-Tramer, 1938; Freitas et al., 2011). Connective gratitude is a more equal process which arises when the receiver creates, or attempts to create a "spiritual

relationship with the donor” (Baumgarten-Tramer, 1938, p. 61; Froh et al., 2007). This can also be by means of repayment with something valuable to the benefactor or the expression of the feeling. Here, repayment can also be toward the society (Freitas et al., 2011). Lastly, finalistic gratitude is the “tendency to reciprocate for the realization of his wish by an action which would be in some way helpful for the object or the situation desired, or would promote their personal development” (Baumgarten-Tramer, 1938, p. 62). In other words, it is the connection of the desire with future activities of the beneficiary related to the situation that prompted the feeling.

It is clear then that gratitude as a concept is still under scrutiny and development in academic areas (Gulliford et al., 2013). In spite of this, as has been shown in this section, there is important variation about its definition and meaning. This variety of conceptions reflects the complexity of the phenomenon. Its definition and categorization consequently helps to understand the main topic regarding this research. Nonetheless, is also essential to consider how gratitude develops as part of human life in order to make this understanding deeper.

### **3 Gratitude as a developmental issue**

As mentioned in the past section, gratitude is a positive feeling that emerges from the interaction between two or more actors in social life. Particularly, this feeling is an interindividual process between benefactor and beneficiary that is suggested to help maintain reciprocal social exchanges and bonds between individuals (Freitas et al., 2011).

The already mentioned personal and interpersonal benefits derived from gratitude suggest the need to track its different expressions and progression throughout an individual’s life in order to increase them. This idea prompts questions regarding when this feeling starts to develop and which factors facilitate its unfolding. The present chapter deals with both issues, trying to summarize perspectives to give an account of gratitude related to this work.

Although little is known about gratitude as a developmental issue in children (Bono & Froh, 2009; Froh et al., 2007; Froh et al., 2008; Tudge et al., in press), there are different explanations trying to answer the above questions. For example, gratitude as a

developmental process that is achieved with maturity (Froh et al., 2008; Klein, 1988). Melanie Klein's (1988) particular psychoanalytic framework related to emotions in children proposes that gratitude, as an already acquired capacity from birth, matures further along with a child's cognitive and emotional systems essential for the child's appreciation of others and oneself (Froh et al., 2007; Froh et al., 2008). In Klein's perspective, the maturity of gratitude has its foundations in the experience of the primal object, the mother's breast (Klein, 1988). It is the experience with the mother's breast, and also the relation with the mother as a good object, as a source of love and nourishment that will enhance the child's appreciation feelings (Froh et al., 2007; Klein, 1988; Komter, 2004). "[T]he infant can only experience complete enjoyment if the capacity for love is sufficiently developed; and it is enjoyment that forms the basis of gratitude." (Klein, 1988, p. 188).

This perspective has received many criticism (see also Komter, 2004 for a more detailed explanation). Alternative accounts argue that gratitude does not emerge in a spontaneous manner in newborns, but rather is a process played over several years (Emmons & Shelton, 2002). According to these accounts, the feeling is developed in childhood and adolescence (Baumgarten-Tramer, 1938), due to environmental factors whereby the child interacts with individuals, participating in the same environment with continuous effort and focus (Bono & Froh, 2009; Freitas et al., 2011; Froh et al., 2007). From this point of view, adults "aid children's emotional understanding by providing conversations and structured activities that embed psychological insight about social experiences, which would include providing prompts to child who receives help or a gift from another person" (Bono & Froh 2009, p. 79).

The above implicitly suggests then differences in the expressions and experiences of gratitude, due to social contexts and developmental factors. Later research related to these differences, has demonstrated that gratitude in general has some expression and occurrence since the early ages (see Nelson et al., 2013). In one of the few studies conducted with small children, Nelson et al. (2013) explored the relation between the understanding of gratitude and knowledge of mental states, also referred to as theory of mind, in pre-school aged individuals. Their results suggest that most of their participants were capable by the age of five to "associate receiving a benefit with positive feelings [...] specific to the benefactor" (Nelson et al. 2013, p. 52), which can be conceived, according to what has been

argued before, as a notion of gratitude. Furthermore, this study also found that knowledge of emotion at the age of three and more understanding of mental states of others at age three and four are predictive factors over the notion of gratitude (Nelson et al., 2013).

Another study attempting to identify differences in the expression of gratitude was conducted by Baumgarten-Tramer (1938) with Swiss children from seven to fifteen years old. Her findings not only suggest the typology of gratitude already mentioned, but also the different expressions of it related to age. According to her results obtained from questionnaires applied to 1059 individuals, the most common type of gratitude between the mentioned ages was verbal with an occurrence of 30% to 48% of the total replies of the participants (Baumgarten-Tramer, 1938; Froh et al., 2007; Freitas et al., 2011). Important variances occurred regarding the concrete and connective types of this feeling. Concrete gratitude was more frequent in eight-year-old children and rarely in individuals between twelve and fifteen years old (Baumgarten-Tramer, 1938). Regarding connective gratitude, this type was identified with more frequency from the eleventh year, but interestingly it was in the group of age twelve that this form of gratitude was reported with more occurrences (Baumgarten-Tramer, 1938). These findings had been supported by Freitas et al. (2011) who implemented the same method in the city of Porto Alegre, Brazil, with 430 children from seven to fourteen years old. The study provides evidence that concrete gratitude is common in individuals aged between seven and ten years, whereas connective gratitude is more likely in individuals aged eleven years or older (Freitas et al., 2011).

In this line, Gordon et al. (2004), based on their study conducted in the United States about responses of children between five and eleven years old to the question of what they were thankful for, reported the trend of small children to consider material objects as a source of thankfulness, and a more complex sense of gratitude in older children. This, according to the authors, could probably reflect a “decreasing egocentrism and an increased interest in the value of interpersonal relationships” (p. 549), due to the fact that older children included friends, family, teachers or rescue workers in their accounts (Gordon et al., 2004).

These studies make plausible the idea that gratitude varies in relation to developmental stages. It seems, and as stated by Freitas et al. (2011), that the trend is a “decrease in the frequency of concrete gratitude and an increase of the connective type [...]

in older children” (p. 761). Nonetheless, it is necessary to mention that gratitude might not always obey the above trend. Despite age and supposed operational stages, individuals aged between eleven and fourteen could express concrete gratitude and, on the other hand, some children below eleven years were able to express connective gratitude (Baumgarten-Tramer, 1938; Freitas et al., 2011).

Concerning adults and adolescents, research has found similar psychological and social benefits of gratitude (Froh et al., in press). Examples of these are experiencing more positive affects, provision and perception of social support, optimism, and satisfaction with family, school, community friends and self, less depression and materialism (Froh et al., 2010; Froh et al., in press; Wood et al., 2008). Yet, the expressions and experiences of gratitude may be different between these groups. As McAdams and Bauer (2004) suggests, grateful feelings and experiences during adolescence might be more related towards abstract entities, whereas in adults the expression of thankfulness is more focused on what they have received from life.

With all the above posited in this section, gratitude seems to be an acquired and progressive unit that has variation in expressions and experiences during the course of the different stages of human life. Although a general trend has been suggested by previous research, namely that gratitude complexity increases with age, developmental stages alone do not give a complete account over this topic. After reviewing gratitude as a developmental issue throughout the life span, it is necessary then to consider the cognitive processes involved in this complex feeling in order to understand it more in depth. Thus, the next section of this work will address the different accounts on the different cognitive processes regarding gratitude.

## **4 The psychology of gratitude**

As mentioned in the previous section, gratitude can be understood from two main developmental perspectives, one assuming that the feeling may be an inherent capacity of individuals, endowed from birth, and another suggesting that gratitude is an interindividual, acquired process constructed through interactions with the world and the others. In addition, it is important to recognize that emergent literature on the topic signals that the

occurrence of gratitude in individuals depends on important psychological processes. This section has the aim to explore these psychological processes in order to, once more, deepen the understanding of the topic from the psychological perspective. To do this, it is necessary to bear in mind that gratitude typically emerges when a beneficiary receives something from a benefactor and that it is the former who feels positive towards the later, creating a fertile ground for repayment actions.

Most literature on gratitude implicitly agrees with the ideas suggested by Tesser, Gatewood and Driver (1968) who claimed that when grateful experiences occur, there are three factors playing an important role; namely, the perception of the benefactor's intention, the cost to the benefactor and the value of the benefit (Algoe, in press; Algoe et al., 2008; Berger, 1975; Froh et al., 2010; Froh et al., in press; Froh et al., 2009; Froh et al., 2007; Gulliford et al., 2013; Kashdan, Mishra, Breen & Froh, 2009; McCullough et al., 2008; Poelkeler & Kuebli, 2014; Weiss, 1985; Wood et al., 2008). However, the three factors above have prompted different perspectives in the study of gratitude, resulting in the addition of more factors related to the analysis of the phenomenon.

One perspective on gratitude developed by McCullough et al. (2008; Bono & Froh, 2009; Froh et al., 2007) suggests that gratitude has three features that distinguish it from other emotions. It works as benefit detector, as reinforcer and as motivator for future prosocial action. The last two features are related with the forthcoming actions on the part of either the benefactor or the receiver. It is as benefit detector that gratitude is responsive to the information related to benefit-giving circumstances, which are in turn linked to the evaluation of the cost to the benefactor, the value to the person who receives the benefit, the intentionality of the action and the degree to which a benefit was given without any obligation to help the other (McCullough et al., 2008).

Another perspective that takes into account the three factors mentioned is that suggested by Nelson et al. (2013), who posed that gratitude is connected to the benefit received and, as such, involves emotion recognition skills according to the social situation wherein gratitude took part. Also, from this perspective, gratitude is linked to the recognition of the benefactor's mental states, so as to be able to recognize that the former acted to fulfil the latter's needs, as well as the knowledge of the mental states of the benefactor from the beneficiary's point of view.

Notwithstanding, it is important to notice that the above accounts place much of their focus on the beneficiary's point of view regarding the intention, cost and value of a given benefit (Algoe, in press; Weiss, 1985). Moreover, the conceptualization of these three factors has caused the almost inescapable link with economist terminology, therefore triggering an important critique.

For Algoe (in press) such perspectives can be identified as economic accounts. From her point of view, the actions toward the beneficiary expose information about the relationship with the benefactor (Algoe, in press; Algoe et al., 2008) and, independently “of whether the benefit recipient *values* a benefit provided by another person, [it is] hypothesized that an additional strong predictor of gratitude would be whether the benefactor was perceived to be *responsive* to the recipient's needs” (italics in original, Algoe in press, p. 9). This process has been named perceived responsiveness to the self and can be defined as the “appraisal that is associated with feeling understood, valued, and cared for by another individual” (Algoe et al., 2008, p. 425). Algoe's and colleagues' (Algoe, in press; Algoe et al., 2008) perspective then brings elements to build a more reciprocal view, for it also includes the benefactor in the process not only as a giver, but also as a interacting individual. If gratitude is to be conceived as interpersonal phenomena, the subjects involved within the grateful situation are to be acknowledged (Baumgarten-Tramer, 1938).

Although all the above perspectives differ in the way different factors trigger gratitude, it is possible to link them with three main psychological phenomena. Firstly, when considering the intention, cost and value, it is possible to discern that the three of them involve an evaluation of the benefit-giving circumstance. This evaluation process can be related to appraisals. As evaluative cognitive processes intervening between an experience and the reaction as a consequence (Lazarus & Folkman, 2012), appraisals are a construct where the personal value and the meaning of something, whether a person or an object, is identified (Addley & Fagley, 2005; Fagley, 2012; Gulliford et al., 2013; Kashdan et al., 2009; Lazarus, 1991). They are a type of cognitive activity which involves continuous and changeable evaluation of the significance of a happening in relation to one's well-being (Lazarus, 1991).



It is in the process of evaluation related to well-being that appraisals take particular meaning. In this sense, appraisals reflect what a certain individual cares about and their primary function is to incorporate personal interest and the realities of the environment where the situation is experienced (Lazarus, 1991). As these environmental realities are in constant change, and there is therefore a continuous flow of information, the evaluation processes are neither fixed nor static. However, it is possible to conceive appraisals as styles or traits when there are “stable patterns of commitment and belief in an individual, as well as individualized patterns of cognitive coping” (Lazarus, 1991, p. 139). This perspective on appraisals acknowledges that emotion affects cognitive processes, but at the same time cognitive processes are influencing the emotion experience (Lazarus, 1991). Additionally, it recognizes that appraisals are influenced by both general knowledge and beliefs, and specific situations. Moreover, it proposes two main, but different kinds of appraisals; primary and secondary appraisals. The first concern the relevance of an event for a person’s well-being providing emotional meaning to the situation and includes three components: “*goal relevance, goal congruence or incongruence and type of ego-involvement*” (italics in the original, Lazarus, 1991, p. 133). Secondary appraisals are related to the decision about taking any action according to the situation. In Lazarus’ words, secondary appraisals are “evaluation of the person’s options and resources for coping with the situation and future prospects” (Lazarus, 1991, p. 145). In these secondary processes of appreciation, there are three elements needed, “*blame or credit, coping potential, and future expectations*” (Lazarus, 1991, p. 134).

As intention, cost and categorization involve evaluative processes, it is necessary to relate them with gratitude. In this line, it is important to highlight two specific aspects that will help to build a strong relation between gratitude and appraisals. Regarding the components of primary appraisals, the type of ego-involvement relates to gratitude, because this “refers to diverse aspects of ego-identity or personal commitments. [...] including self- and social-esteem, moral values, ego-ideals, meaning and ideas, other persons and their well-being, and life goals” (Lazarus, 1991, p. 150). If gratitude involves a valorisation of a benefit or favour, then personal meanings are at stake. Regarding the secondary appraisal components, it is the coping potential conceived as “an evaluation by a person of the prospects for doing or thinking something that will, in turn, change or protect the person-

environment relationship” (Lazarus, 1991, p. 150) that helps to connect the received favour or benefit with a repaying desire. The link between appraisals and gratitude is then conceived in this work as strong and fruitful when understanding the cognitive processes of this last concept. One study that might support this idea was the one conducted by Wood, Maltby, Stewart and Joseph (2008). In this study, they suggested that gratitude and appreciations might be conceptualized as the same unit as the main result of their quantitative explorations involving twelve scales from the three instruments measuring gratitude levels: Gratitude, Resentment, Appreciation Test (GRAT), Appreciation scale and Gratitude Questionnaire-6 (GQ-6).

Connected to appraisals, there is another psychological process that appears to permeate the intention, cost, and the value in gratitude situations, namely the capability of individuals to empathize with others. Among other variables such as optimism and humility (Froh et al., 2007), literature seems to agree with the idea that empathy might be a cognitive process that connects with gratitude (Bono & Froh, 2009; Emmons, 2004; Froh et al., 2007; Gordon et al., 2004; Layous & Lyubomirsky, 2014; Poelkeler & Kuebli, 2014). As a psychological process, empathy refers to emotional responses that connect an individual with others’ emotional experiences (Saarni, 1999; Strayer & Roberts, 1989). In an expression used by Saarni (1999), it is the “*feeling with others*” (italics in the original, p. 163). It is suggested that empathic processes are experienced when the children become less egocentric and enter early adolescence (Bono & Froh, 2009; Froh et al., 2010; McCullough et al., 2001). This *feeling with others* has cognitive features because, according to Saarni (1999), empathic processes rely on the awareness of what type of situation is causing certain emotions and the internal state of others. She argues that “[...] representations, whether emotion-eliciting events or emotion-experiencing people, determine the nature of the empathic response” (p. 168). Therefore, empathy is dependent on the type of cognitive representations that an individual is capable.

It is due to this variation of an individual’s representation capabilities that Saarni (1999), drawing on Strayer’s ideas, conceives that empathy has four different developmental stages. The first one comprises responses to emotion cues in a “person’s expressive behavior or in arousing contextual cues” (p. 166). The second phase requires an introjection of the other in oneself and a “permeable self-other boundary” (Saarni, 1999, p.

166). In the third phase, there is a process of repercussion of the imagined feelings of the other into one's evoked similar past experiences, being in this phase when "the other's emotional state becomes 'charged' with emotion meanings based in our own experience" (Saarni, 1999, p. 167). Finally, a last stage where there is a consideration of what type of action is required, serving as a resolution stage where the self and the other are conceived as separately, turning empathic processes into sympathetic ones (Saarni, 1999).

It is owed to the appreciation and reciprocation processes occurring in grateful situations that empathy might be an important catalyst, since it makes possible the different social-cognitive determinants of gratitude (Bono & Froh, 2009; Froh et al., 2010; Froh et al., 2009; McCullough et al., 2001; Saarni, 1999). Coupled with this, related phenomena, such as improved social competencies, understanding of others' emotions and thoughts, and the increasing interest in valuing more interpersonal relations (Bono & Froh, 2009; Gordon et al., 2004; Layous & Lyubomirsky, 2014; Saarni, 1999), highlights the importance of empathic processes on the development of gratitude. These help to argue that empathy requires appraisals in order to imagine what the other is going through (Saarni, 1999). The connection between these two psychological processes, appraisals and empathy, is important to understand the requirements for experiencing gratitude. Furthermore, this connection between the self and the others in terms of actions is related with a broader and complex psychological phenomenon needed in order to experience gratitude.

When receiving a benefit the two of the main processes involved concern the intentionality of the benefactor and the effort with what it has been done. These require a recognition that a person, a benefactor, has acted deliberately in order to fulfil needs or desires (Bono & Froh, 2009; Froh et al., 2010; McConnell, 1993; Nelson et al., 2013; Layous & Lyubomirsky, 2014). This recognition of others' actions as intentional involves the understanding of mental states, which in turn are related to the individual's theory of mind (Bono & Froh, 2009; Nelson et al., 2013).

Theory of mind is a complex cognitive function that involves a sophisticated understanding regarding emotional and cognitive states of other persons, as agents, whose acts are driven by desires, beliefs, knowledge, emotions and intentions (Duval, Piolino, Bejanin, Eustache & Desgranges, 2011; Frith & Frith, 2005; Ford, Lobao, Macaulay & Herdman, 2011; Gergely in Froh et al., 2007; McAdams & Bauer, 2004; Saarni, 1999;

Shahaeian, Peterson, Slaughter & Wellman, 2011). In other words, it is the explanation about behaviours and other people's actions on the basis on their minds (Frith & Frith, 2005) which, in turn, allows individuals to anticipate or interpret social interactions in daily life (Duval et al., 2011). It is with this process that the individual recognizes that other "person's knowledge is different from [...] [one's] own" (Frith & Frith, 2005, p. 644). As a cognitive process and due to its relevance for the regulation of social interactions, theory of mind is regarded as an aspect of the mental processes needed to decode, generate and regulate behaviour and social interactions, also known under the name of social cognition (Duval et al., 2011).

According to Duval et al. (2011), developmental research distinguishes between two main types of theory of mind. The first type is cognitive theory of mind, which is related to thoughts, intentions and cognitive states of other people, and within which it is possible to identify first and second order mental representations. First order representations implicitly assume that other people have their own consciousness and they are the individual's thoughts regarding other persons' perspective (Duval et al., 2011). Second order representations "correspond to more internal representations about ourselves, and involve simultaneously adopting two perspectives" (Duval et al. 2011, p. 628). The second type of theory of mind concerns different emotions, feelings and affective states of other people, and it is regarded as affective theory of mind (Duval et al., 2011). To some extent, this involves a genuine understanding of the affective states, which might result as the adoption of another persons' perspective (Duval et al., 2011).

It is due to the above-mentioned processes that theory of mind is considered as tantamount to empathy (Duval et al., 2011; Ford et al., 2011). However, it is suggested that empathy and affective theory of mind are different constructs occurring in different developmental stages (Ford et al., 2011), because whereas empathy concerns only the *feeling with others*, without understanding the reasons behind the feeling, affective theory of mind does not necessarily involve the experience of any emotion (Duval et al., 2011). The link between empathy and theory of mind is strong and it is hypothesized that the latter is possible due to empathic processes (Frith & Frith, 2005). Gratitude, whether as a cognitive or affective happening, is related to theory of mind due to the process of understanding other persons as individuals whose acts are deliberate and have the aim to

fulfil certain desires or needs (Bono & Froh, 2009; Froh et al., 2010; McConnell, 1993; McAdams & Bauer, 2004; Nelson et al., 2013; Layous & Lyubomirsky, 2014).

All the above in this section provides support to argue that recognition of mental states of other persons, empathy and appraisals are important psychological processes underlying the three factors proposed by Tesser, Gatewood and Driver (1968). However, as argued throughout this section, it is necessary to bear in mind that these three psychological processes are interrelated, bringing more complexity in the study of grateful situations. Once gratitude has been explained as a psychological matter, it is necessary to consider it also as a cultural phenomenon in order to create links between the psychological and the socio-cultural scopes, thus providing a better perspective of the topic. The following section touches the concerned topic as a culturally and contextually dependent phenomenon, which will throw some light on other important dimensions.

## **5 Gratitude, culture and society**

Up to now, in this paper, it has been argued that gratitude is an interindividual process between a benefactor and a beneficiary that fosters a positive feeling in the later. This process involves three important cognitions in order to be experienced, namely appraisals, empathy and a theory of mind. Nonetheless in this section, it is recognized that cognitive processes do not solely affect behaviours, but they are in turn affected by environmental factors, such as population density, climate, and affluence (Matsumoto & Juang, 2004). Therefore gratitude experiences are affected by environmental and socio-cultural factors. This section attempts to merge the afore-mentioned cognitive aspects with socio-cultural ideas in order to acknowledge the complexity of the topic under scrutiny and to build a more comprehensive understanding of it. This is due to the imperative necessity to conceptually clarify and broaden gratitude as a research topic (Lambert et al., 2009) by integrating the social, cultural, psychological as well as the moral aspects (Komter, 2004).

If gratitude is taken as an interindividual phenomenon, as it has been argued during the previous sections, then it is necessary to talk about its emergence as a social and adaptive phenomenon. According to McAdams and Bauer (2004), after living in small groups where hunting and foraging were their principal characteristics, humans started to

develop adaptive tendencies and capacities that promoted cooperative work and group living. In this line and following de Waal (as mentioned in McAdams & Bauer, 2004), humans are conceived to have evolved to display four important tendencies and capacities: “sympathy-related traits, norm-related characteristics, reciprocity and getting along” (86). It is, then, after humans developed a sense of cooperation when these different capacities and tendencies were developed. Although it seems that they are all related to each other, reciprocity for this analysis is taken to play an important role in the appearance of gratitude in societies (Bonnie & de Waal, 2004; Komter, 2004; Gulliford et al., 2013; Piaget, 1995).

Reciprocity is defined as a mutual exchange of favours or services between two individuals (Bonnie & de Waal, 2004; Piaget, 1995), and it has been suggested to be not only human, but also a social animal’s strength (Bonnie & de Waal, 2004). According to Piaget (1995), those favours or services derived from individual’s actions can be evaluated according to specific value relations forming in turn what he calls scales of values. Different collectives, societies, and nations have diverse scales of values and individuals are able to know different scales of values. These collectives are only able to survive when having common scales of values for the evaluation of the exchanges and when these exchanges “lead to reciprocal gains” (Piaget, 1995, p. 111). Yet, such scales of values are suggested by Piaget (1995) to be unstable and are constantly constructing and disintegrating. This is why, besides reciprocal benefit exchanges, every society displays a set of devices to preserve the values by creating precise and common obligation systems (Emmons, 2004; Freitas et al., 2011; Komter, 2004; Mays, 2000; Piaget, 1995). In other words, everyday exchanges of services or favours between individuals need to be valued in the same way from all those belonging to the specific society in order to survive as a group.

Due to the volatile characteristics of those values, societies need to ensure equivalence of these exchanged values no matter social class, interest, or other factor (Freitas et al., 2011; Mays, 2000; Piaget, 1995). One of these systems is legal norms, also named codified norms, which recognize the obligations and the rights among individuals (Piaget, 1995). Morality, also conceived as non-codified norms, is the other system to preserve values over time. Morality, according to Piaget (1995), is the system “coordinating [...] actions and satisfactions according to a disinterested point of view, that is to say, each

person evaluates himself reciprocally as a function of his partner and no longer from a personal point of view” (p. 115).

It is understood then that gratitude, conceived from Piaget’s (1995) and de Waal’s (as mentioned in McAdams & Bauer, 2004) works, has evolutionary and adaptive basis in reciprocity, but as a social happening goes beyond encompassing moral grounds (Berger, 1975; Gulliford et al., 2013; Piaget, 1995, Weiss, 1985). In simplistic terms, gratitude is related to morality when recognizing others’ actions in terms of good or bad action for the beneficiary’s sake according to certain societies (Matsumoto & Juang, 2004). Complementing the above framework by using Berger’s (1975) and Weiss’ (1985) moral account, the services, favours and actions within everyday exchanges involve not only appreciation of the other as a source of one’s own well-being, but also appreciation of the other as a person of value in himself/herself. Thereby, gratitude is the expression of complex feelings, values, attitudes and beliefs (Berger, 1975; White, 1999) about and toward the other with whom and individual interacts and exchanges actions, services and favours. As Berger conceives it, “having regard for someone as of value, as deserving respect and concern, involves having certain feelings and attitudes; thus when we display these, we exhibit what their moral status is in our eyes” (1975, p. 308).

Owing to this understanding of gratitude as expression of feelings, beliefs and attitudes it is possible to relate it to more embedded constructs within societies. Culture is one of these complex constructs where a group of people shares set of rules, including values, attitudes, beliefs and practices in order to survive (Matsumoto & Juang, 2004; Tudge, 2008). Taking into account all the above, it can be understood that, if every society develops different scales of values and, therefore, different moral mechanisms and legal systems, it is possible that different cultures are constructed within different societies, while each individual can belong to different cultures at the time (Tudge, 2008). For all these reasons, gratitude can be felt, expressed and understood in different fashions in different cultures. According to Eisenstein and Bodman (1993), gratitude is not only a language response to a given benefit, service, or action, but it also involves cultural values and customs, being therefore a cultural construction (Appadurai, 1985). Gratitude and culture are therefore tightly interwoven in different aspects of social and daily life, such as religion, sex identity, language, daily interaction with others or social events.

Different studies from diverse disciplines analysing diverse phenomena support this view. Regarding religion, research suggests difference in the conception of gratitude between Judaism, Christianity and Islam, although it seems to be a common phenomenon invoked by all three of them (Emmons, 2004). Most importantly, it has been shown that gratitude within religious conceptions has its own meaning, leading authors to differentiate between religious gratitude, or gratitude to some superior entity, and general gratitude (Emmons, 2004; Aghababaei & Tabik, 2012). A study addressing this issue in Muslim contexts found that both types of gratitude had moderate to strong correlation with general health, anxiety levels, and life satisfaction; however, it was the dispositional gratitude the one that outperformed the other in relation with mental health (Aghababaei & Tabik 2012).

With respect of language, gratitude has been studied and compared between highly hierarchical and egalitarian societies having different outcomes regarding its expression and experience. In a qualitative study conducted by Appadurai (1985) in Tamil culture, in south India, it was found that gratitude is hard to express verbally, due to the grammatical difficulty to place the “noun in a syntactic form” (p. 237). Moreover, in this context, the word thanks is not only directed to simple generosity, but one that transcends rules and roles as prescriptions. Thanking the donor is to acknowledge him as transmitter of good and as a source of them, which is an uncomfortable idea for Tamils “since it subverts the benefactor's own notion of the source to which he owes *his largess*” (italics in the original, Appadurai, 1985, p. 239).

In this culture, “[t]he major way to show gratitude for a received action, service or benefit is by making the appropriate return gift, at the appropriate time and in the appropriate form” (Appadurai, 1985, p. 240). This account then suggests that gratitude may prompt contradictory or conflictive feelings leading to the avoidance of individuals to express it. A related study is the one conducted by Layous, Lee, Choi, and Lyubomirsky (2013) in which individuals from South Korea and from the United States of America were compared about the effect of expressions of gratitude and the performance of kind acts on them. The study demonstrated that, whereas participants from the United States of America profited more from expressing gratitude when compared to South Korean participants, both groups benefited in the same way from doing kind acts (Layous, Lee, Choi & Lyubomirsky, 2013).



A similar comparative study was developed by Sommers and Kosmitzki (1988). From the point of view of emotions as an emotional and individual phenomenon, they interviewed individuals from the United States and Germany regarding several aspects of their emotional experiences, including, among others, gratitude, love, and hope. Six questions were addressed (such as “Which emotions do you experience regularly and often?” and “Which emotions do you most like to experience?”) and their results suggest that culture, age and sex are the major variables in the responses obtained. Regarding gratitude, they found that compared with the German subjects, American males reported to have experienced less gratitude. Moreover, “German men (especially younger men) tended more than the American men to evaluate gratitude positively, characterizing it as one of the most constructive emotions” (Sommers & Kosmitzki 1988, p. 43).

Some other studies unveil different related aspects of gratitude as a cultural happening. In a study conducted by Eisenstein and Bodman (1993), where expressions of gratitude were compared between English native speakers and second or foreign language learners of this language, revealed, among many other things, that while non-natives accomplished responses of gratitude in a native like way to situations where it was required “simple, phatic, ritualized expressions of gratitude” (p. 68), the same individuals had problems in complex speech acts. The authors concluded that gratitude is a mutually developed speech act, where both the receiver and the benefactor collaborate to the situations, and suggests that “while thanking appears to be a universal function, it is accomplished differently in contrasting cultures, whose values may focus differentially on the various components that constitute expressions of gratitude” (p. 74; for a similar study see Wong, 2010).

Besides widening approaches and the understanding with regards to gratitude, the mentioned investigations support the idea that this phenomenon varies depending on the values, norms, beliefs, attitudes of specific cultures and societies. To illustrate more specifically this view, it might be useful to highlight the conclusions from Appadurai’s (1985) as well as from Sommers and Kosmitzki’s (1988) works. According to them, in highly hierarchical societies where key social relations are defined through notions of reciprocity and are a fundamental principle, and where morality and etiquette are closely linked, “gratitude implies appreciation, appreciation involves acknowledgment, and the

only significant form of acknowledgment is return” (Appadurai, 1985, p. 240). This is different than in egalitarian societies, like the United States of America where individuals, especially men, find it difficult to experience gratitude because it denotes inequality (Appadurai, 1985; Sommers & Kosmitzki, 1988).

Up to now, it has been argued that gratitude has its roots in reciprocity as an adaptive social phenomenon, but it has developed in complex ways and has become a process that touches social, moral, and cultural grounds. Gratitude is not only a language function, but also involves values, beliefs, attitudes, when expressing and experiencing it, and feelings are at stake. Moreover, and most importantly for this paper, it has been stated that gratitude may vary in its conception and experience due to specific social and cultural circumstances.

## **6 Gratitude and school**

In the past section, the understanding of gratitude as a cultural and context-dependent phenomenon is clear and it raises questions regarding different types of gratitude, depending on each individual and group. Yet, if gratitude is tightly linked to culture, conceived as shared actions or practices, then an important inference could and must be made. This inference will be analysed in the present section, which will help to link gratitude, its cultural, social and psychological aspects within a specific context. One of many contexts where and through which cultural practices are shared and perhaps taught in some sense is the school context.

In order to share practices, values, rules and beliefs, culture is dependent on the communication of them across time and across generations (Matsumoto & Juang, 2004; Tudge, 2008). In the case of gratitude, it can be pointed cases when individuals explicitly remember being taught to be thankful for certain gift, benefit, service or action received (Eisenstein & Bodman, 1993), especially when received from adults (McAdams & Bauer, 2004). Different cultural institutions make possible this communication of important aspects of cultures and societies (Layous, & Lyubomirsky, 2014), one of which is school. Yet, it is important to mention that every school might differ in its ways of doing things,

affecting practices and consequently, each school within specific country, area or city is having an own culture.

When acknowledging that every school has its own culture, and linking this to everything mentioned in the past section, it is possible to deduct that gratitude may have a different and personal meaning within this institution. This idea is supported by different authors from different fields not only because of cultural arguments, but also due to the different ground that the whole educational phenomenon brings to the understanding about beneficiary and benefactor (Gulliford et al., 2013; Howells, 2014; White, 1999). Especially Howells' (2012, 2014; Howells & Cumming, 2012) definition of gratitude as an active and conscious action, not only as appreciation, where individuals act upon their gratitude feelings in ways such as greeting and thanking to students or colleagues, helps to evince gratitude in education as having its own meaning.

Following the idea that gratitude has its own meaning in educational contexts it is important to recognize the possible social agents playing a role in this phenomenon. Although different agents are constructing the formal educational environment, for the present analysis, the teacher-student and student-student relations are important. According to literature, peers and teachers as well as other adults help children to understand emotions (Bono & Froh, 2009), but when looking specifically at gratitude within educational contexts, teachers typically encourage expressions of gratitude that are regular as well as public (McAdams & Bauer, 2004).

The interpersonal character of gratitude seems to be a strong feature in educational contexts, but in this light it is necessary to wonder how gratitude is taught. Two main views can be spotted. The first is an aretaic view where children are only able to learn manners, virtues or moral related concepts by being with virtuous persons; in this case learning to be grateful is only possible by being with grateful teachers (Fenstermacher, 2001; Hansen, 2001; Richardson & Fallona, 2001; Richardson & Fenstermacher, 2001). The second perspective suggests that it is not only by picking up moral virtues from virtuous persons that these can be learnt. According to Fenstermacher (2001; Hansen, 2001; Richardson & Fallona, 2001; Richardson & Fenstermacher, 2001), different strategies are used by teachers in order to convey those moral virtues in their students; such strategies include modelling, construction of classroom community, didactic instruction, calling out for a

particular way of behaving, private conversations, and the showcasing of a particular case/student.

Although Fenstermacher's (2001; Hansen, 2001; Richardson & Fallona, 2001; Richardson & Fenstermacher, 2001) ideas have a specific focus on virtues as moral goods and are, in turn, related to the concept of manners as the ones conducting expressions of dispositions and traits, it is possible to link his studies with the concept of gratitude within the present work. This relation has been suggested by Howells (2014). For her, there is an interrelation between the two mentioned views and suggests that it is not only a question of what a teacher does, but also about who the teacher is that will have a "crucial effect on the teaching-learning dynamic" (p. 61).

Regarding the study of this context, where teaching and learning are formally recognized, few investigations have been conducted (Howells, 2012, 2014; Poelkeler & Kuebli, 2014), most of them developed in quantitative fashion (Howells, 2014). One specific emerging trend emerging is the positive emotions perspective. This has driven the importance of gratitude as a political agenda, rather than an educational one (Howells, 2012; Howells & Cumming, 2012). This due to the implicit conception of this approach to gratitude as a phenomenon to coach emotions in order to foster happiness and well-being within school contexts (Howells, 2012, 2014; Howells & Cumming, 2012).

Among the qualitative studies developed in educational environments the following are paramount for the present argumentation. In a qualitative investigation conducted in an Australian University with six pre-service teachers in the framework of their practicum in low and middle socio-economic environments, Howells and Cumming (2012) used structured interviews as well as focus groups to explore gratitude. They found a core element from the participants' responses on questions related to the application, effects and challenges of gratitude. This was that gratitude was about "giving back" (Howells & Cumming, 2012, p. 79), depending on the situation and the context. Gratitude was reported to be practiced as thanking others (verbally), greeting students, giving gifts to colleagues and school staff, and preparing themselves in order to see things in an open way in the classroom.

In another related study, Howells (2014) conducted a qualitative case study in secondary school in Australia with low retention problems. With the main objective to

explore gratitude in the relation between teacher and student, the researcher collected data with questionnaires and focus groups. Results reflected three different ways to conceive gratitude: as an action, as an emotional state and as interaction, where gratitude was used to enhance teacher and student relationship in some way (Howells, 2014). Within the interaction conception, findings were related to the investigation referred to above, namely “[p]articipants engaged in a gratitude practice relating to social interaction in three interrelated ways: through greeting students, active relationship building, and actions that followed changes of their inner attitude towards their students” (Howells, 2014, p. 63).

Both of the studies reported in their results that gratitude was mentioned by participants as having an important role in increasing student engagement, improving school and class environment, improving relations between teacher and student and also a sense of being good teachers (Howells, 2014; Howells and Cumming, 2012). Gratitude in the school environment appears to be a complex concept that has an important foundations on the teacher-student relationship. Moreover, it is not a static process by which students are receiving and observing what the teacher does, but it is rather a process where beneficiary and benefactor are actively providing elements to build a relation that will help in the understanding of gratitude in a particular context and situation.

When acknowledging gratitude as a psychological phenomenon affected by sociological and cultural factors, it is possible to conceive a more specific, although more complex, type of gratitude within school contexts. Gratitude is then conceived as a cultural-, contextual- and situational-dependent interindividual entity which is in need of constant and more refined definitions according to each individual (Howells, 2014). It is in order to recognize this that the present investigation explores gratitude in a specific school environment.

## **7 Method**

As mentioned throughout the theoretical framework of this study, most of the investigations concerning gratitude are based on quantitative methods (Howells, 2014). Thus, and in order to fill the gap by exploring a different perspective, the present study tries to understand

gratitude in school with a qualitative approach in order to deepen the burgeoning knowledge on this topic.

The aim of the present study was to initially explore the psychological mechanisms through which teachers help their students to recognize, feel and express gratitude in a school environment. However, in the framework of non-positivistic research, due to the nature of the data, the lack of literature regarding the topic in this specific context and, most importantly, the author's understanding and reconstruction of the concept of gratitude, a more general exploration took place about the potential situations during which the feeling and/or expression of gratitude might occur within the classroom context. Moreover, an additional aim emerged while the investigation was being conducted, namely the exploration of gratitude as a concept in a primary school context.

The present study was conducted in a descriptive and naturalistic fashion, using the stimulated recall method. Although, according to the literature research done for this investigation, no studies have been carried out with this specific method in relation with gratitude, its application was decided due its characteristics. Initially, its potential to evince cognitive processes taking part in individual's actions was a main reason for this decision (Lyle, 2002). However, as the investigation and analysis continued, its potentiality to obtain narrative accounts from participants was a more important and helpful feature for achieving the mentioned aims.

The current study can also be regarded as a data-driven one, which attempts to provide a first glance at the topic of gratitude in a specific context. In this light, and in line with other studies (e.g. Howells & Cumming, 2012; Howells, 2014), expressions of individuals are needed to lend meaning to the gratitude phenomenon.

## **7.1 Participants**

The study was conducted in a primary school in the city of Jyväskylä, Finland. After searching for contact information of first grade teachers through the governmental web pages of the city and the surrounding communes, forty teachers were contacted via email. Twenty-three of them were contacted in Finnish, with the help of a native speaker who translated from the original mail from English to Finnish, while the rest were contacted directly in English. In the mail, teachers were invited to participate in a Master's research,

which had the aim to understand the different psychological mechanisms used to develop different feelings within the classroom.

From the teachers contacted in Finnish, one replied and informed other school colleagues about the research. As a consequence, one more teacher decided to participate in the project. In total, two first-grade primary school teachers from the same school, one male and one female, decided to participate in the research. At the time the research was being conducted, both were full-time class teachers and their students ranged between the age of six and eight, the majority of which were seven years old..

Teachers were over forty years of age and their experience in the educational field varied. Whereas the female teacher had a six-year-long experience in teaching in different locations within the city, the male teacher had been teaching for twenty-five years at the same school. Both of them reported working mainly with first and second grades and having some specialization related to music.

None of the teachers was acquainted with the stimulated recall method used in this project, but both of them reported being interested in feelings and took part in at least one related course, due to life experiences and own interests.

## **7.2 Ethical considerations**

During the different phases of this research process, several considerations were taken in order to ensure quality and ethical integrity. During the preparation of observations and recordings, informed consent was asked from both teachers about the collection and use of the data. After that, with the help of a Finnish speaker, consent was also asked from all parents of the students of the participating groups. This was made possible with help of the participant teachers who informed and asked consent from all parents through the main electronic communication platform used for general and particular issues regarding pupils and school life.

During observations and recordings, each teacher explained in Finnish to their own groups the different tasks and asked if any of the children disagreed with any of the procedures. The researcher learned the names of all children and teachers, due to the requirements of the methodology. However, all names were changed in this study in order to maintain and respect confidentiality and anonymity.

After recordings and during the analysis of data, all files and pictures were named with the newly given names and were encrypted in a separate device to ensure confidentiality. While analysing data, it was decided to not differentiate between the two participant teachers in order to avoid direct relations and, therefore, to not cause any judgement regarding their job and practices. With this as argument and justification, all the following sections try to evade naming teachers, so as not to identify them by gender or any other distinctive characteristic.

### **7.3 Context and classroom observations**

Within the school, both groups were located in different classrooms on the ground floor, sharing the area with another same-grade group. The three classrooms were physically next to each other and shared a library area nearby. Each classroom had its own schedules decided by teachers, based on the children's needs, as they reported during the familiarization phase.

Group size was nearly the same. One classroom had twenty pupils, ten girls and ten boys, whereas the other classroom consisted of nineteen members, eleven girls and eight boys. Within groups, at least one child was reported as having direct immigrant background. One teacher reported having a female student whose parents were foreigners, and the child was having language difficulties, therefore being supported by extra Finnish language courses.

Inside both classrooms, the sufficient devices and tools for teaching were noticeable. From technological devices as computers, projector and speakers, to a wide range of different instruments used in the teaching-learning environment, such as piano, blackboard, lift-lid desks for each student, and tools, like pencils and colours, were kept in the different shelves or cabinets allocated in the classrooms.

Students were accommodated differently in each classroom. In the first classroom students were sitting in three main vertical rows facing the blackboard (see figure 1). Each row consisted of pairs of lift-lid desks, with no more than four lines of desks in it. Only one student was sitting alone at the end of the middle row. However, the teacher did not report having problems with that pupil's behaviour. A piano was allocated at the back part of the classroom along with two desk computers.



The second classroom was arranged in a different way. Rows of lift-lid desks were placed horizontally with respect to the blackboard. There were four rows of desks, the biggest the ones being allocated in the middle with six desks each, whereas the other rows had four desks each. Within this classroom, the piano was located in the front part of the classroom and near the first two main rows (see figure 2). Two desk computers also formed part of this classroom's resources and were placed at the same place as the piano.

Each classroom had students' works hanged on the blackboard. However, they had a distinct pattern in terms of decoration and reminders. One classroom had letters and pictures that began with the symbol hanged at the top of the main blackboard. The other classroom had the schedule of the day, the date, year and season on the main blackboard, as well as pictures depicting different emotions.

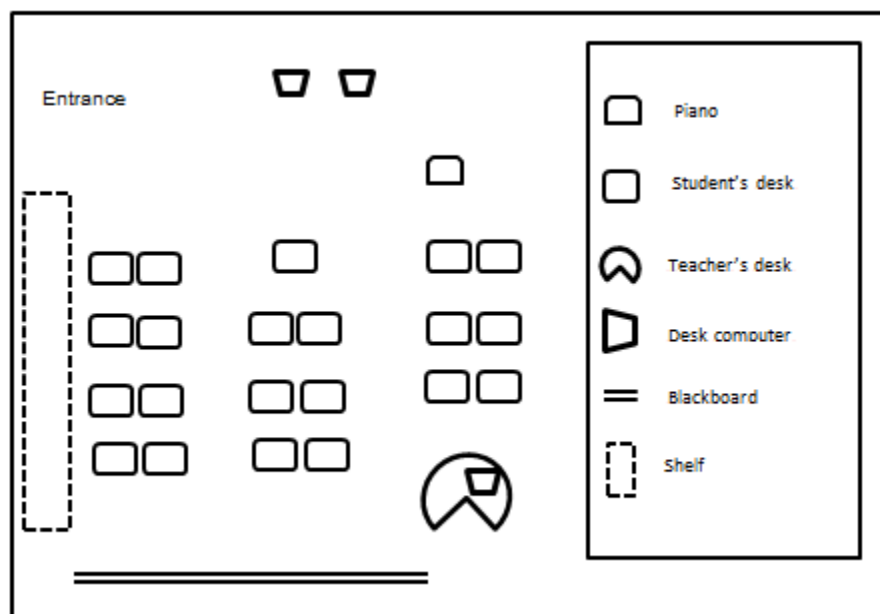


Figure 1  
*Structure and accommodation of classroom 1*

Only one of the classrooms had an explicit aid regarding gratitude, a hanged paper printed in black. It was placed on the cabinet located near the entrance door and presented a poem, as mentioned by the teacher, above a picture of a meal (see figure 3). This was recited by the students and teacher of that classroom before going to lunch, while all students queued before the main entrance door.

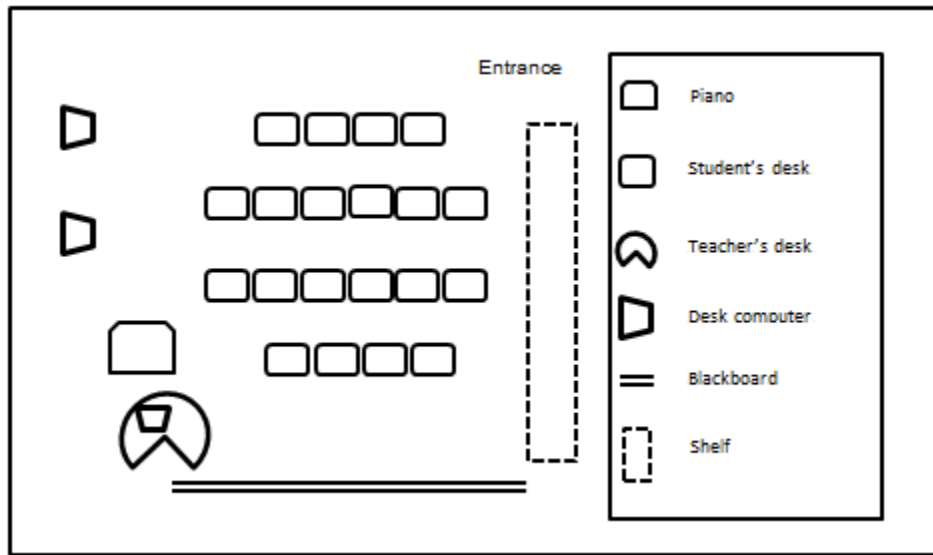


Figure 2  
*Structure and accommodation of classroom 2*

Kattila ja vuoka, täältä tulee ruoka.  
 Lusikkaan kun tartun,  
 suureksi mä vartun.  
 Leivän syön, juoman juon,  
 ruokarauhan muille suon.  
 Muistan aina kiittää, siitä iloa riittää



Figure 3  
*Gratitude poem*

According to the teacher, this poem could be translated as the following:

Here comes the food, I take the spoon, and then I grow up. I eat bread, I drink milk or water, and then I give peace and quiet for everybody else who is eating at the same time. And then I remember always to say thank because it makes us feel happy (Participant teacher [hereafter, PT])

A common characteristic about the classrooms was that each lift-lid desk was labelled with the pupil's name. Also, both classroom teachers' desks were in front of classroom and had a desk computer to aid their lesson.

## **7.4 Data collection**

According to the different literature concerning stimulated recall using videotaping, an important issue to develop this method is the familiarization with the environment and with the subject to make a rapport in order to decrease the uncomfortable feelings (Henry & Fetters, 2012) and to understand the settings (Lyle, 2002). Thus, a first contact with the two teachers was required before any observation, a session which also served the purpose of explaining the research phases briefly and agree on possible schedules.

After the first contact was done, it was requested of the teachers that the researcher be allowed to make a one-hour observation in the class and record it in order to get to know the environment, make some notes, and decide the best possible place for the camera. The camera was to be placed in order to record the interactions between teacher and students as well as among classmates, and to capture potential grateful moments between individuals.

No more than six days after the familiarization class happened, the recording of a normal class in Finnish was made for each group on the same day, as agreed upon with the teacher. One class was recorded for forty-eight minutes, while the other for fifty-two minutes. Recordings started when the teacher entered the classroom and were stopped when the last child left the classroom for the normal break after the lesson.

During the recording process, the researcher was taking notes about video time and events when the potential grateful moment occurred. It is important to mention that the camera was moved if teacher-student interactions were out of screen.

The guiding principles followed for the recording were. First, when the teacher was talking to the group for whatever purpose, the screen was moved so that she/he was at the edge, left or right, in order to be able to simultaneously capture as many pupils as possible. Second, when the teacher approached any pupil to give personal feedback, to check or to give any support, the camera was moved so that the interaction between teacher and student was in the middle of the screen. The camera zoomed only when the distance between camera and teacher prevented good visibility of the interaction, especially if it was taking part in the last rows of desks. Third, the camera aimed at following interactions between individuals, as they were more important than the material products of an activity.

Immediately after the recording was over, the researcher asked both teachers in what format she/he wanted to have the video and both teachers agreed that on mp3 format in a USB device. Videos were shared with each teacher at different times due to their schedules. One teacher received the video three hours later the same day, whereas the other received it one day later. At the moment of the video-sharing phase, the researcher gave a notebook, a USB device with the video and the following printed instructions, which both researcher and teacher read:

“Please, watch this video as many times you want and get familiarized with it. Specifically I would like you to identify the most vivid events in which you feel that gratitude was taking place in your classroom. It can be between students or between you and your student(s). Please do not search for any source of information about gratitude; rather I want you to base your selection on your current understanding of gratitude. Here you have a notebook to make notes about the time and the event, use it as you feel is better for you. Try to write the notes in English. Please bring the notebook and the USB back with you next time we meet.”

The rationale behind this decision is that, according to the literature, by sharing the product with the subjects it is possible to minimize potential teacher’s anxiety generated by watching themselves in the video (Rowe, 2009). It is important to note that it was not until this stage that teachers got to know the specific topic of the research. This decision was

taken to counter-balance the researcher's power and to raise more pathways to explore the concerned topic (Rowe, 2009).

As an attempt to increase validity in this study (Gass & Mackey, 2000; Lyle, 2002), it was decided not to exceed a one-week period between the recording and the stimulated recall. Thus, it was during the first contact when the meeting for the stimulated recall was scheduled between the research and the teacher.

Between the time of the recording and the stimulated recall, the researcher analysed the video and took notes related to grateful moments that occurred in the video, based on the definition of gratitude suggested by Nelson et al. (2013). At the same time, both videos were given to a Finnish-speaking trained coder, to whom the definition of gratitude used in this study was explained. The instructions for the coder were to find the grateful moments happening in the each recorded classroom, based on the specified definition.

After this identification of grateful moments, both researcher and coder discussed about their findings and the reasons for choosing certain events from each video. The total amount of grateful moments was thirteen in one classroom and seven in the other.

The stimulated recall process took place in the same classroom where the recording was done, on a portable computer provided by the researcher and in the English language. Before formally talking about the recording, a 'giggle time' was encouraged by the researcher to informally guide the teacher towards the topic (Rowe, 2009). After this initial stage, voice recording started and the following printed instructions were given and read by researcher and teacher:

“Now we are going to do a different type of activity. In this part of the research, I am interested in finding out what you were thinking during the grateful moments that you and I selected privately of the recorded class. I would like you to describe the moment and if you did something related to it explain why you did it. Also I would like to know what was going on through your mind during those moments.”

“So now we are going to watch the video again and I want you try to remember what were you thinking and doing then, not what you think about it now.” (Gass & Mackey, 2000, p. 59)

“I want you to stop the video in those moments you selected in private and try to remember what were you thinking at that time. I will also stop the video in those moments I found and ask you to describe them, think back, and tell me what was going on through your mind. It is important that you could provide an explanation for each moment we selected.”

It is important to mention that while the teachers explained the different moments on the tape, questions to fuel participants’ interaction were made. Questions related to thoughts, beliefs and emotions, such as “What are you doing/trying to do at this specific moment?”, “Can you tell me what were you thinking at that point?” (Gass & Mackey, 2000; Henry & Fetters, 2012) were made.

Finally, open questions, shaped by literature as well as a pilot questionnaire conducted with another Finnish teacher, were asked to the participant teachers in order to obtain explicit information about gratitude and its development in their students. Some of these interrogatives were “What is gratitude for you?” and “Do you think it is important to help your students to be grateful?” Moreover, specific questions related to the activities observed during the entire data collection stage were made to enhance an understanding of the data.

## **8 Data Analysis**

After performing the stimulated recall process, the researcher transcribed the sessions, following a process of verbal analysis. This was decided following other studies which applied this method (see Cherrington & Loveridgen, 2014; Dempsey, 2010; Morgan 2007) and given the capability of verbal analysis as an explaining method to uncover models and to know what individuals actually do, as well as the capture of knowledge representations (Chi, 1997).

The different processes used in this work were heavily drawn from Chi (1997) as well as from Gass and Mackey (2000). From the former author were taken techniques related to verbal analysis, including reduction, segmentation, development of coding

schemes, operational evidences, depicting formalism, and pattern seeking and interpreting. From the later authors, procedures related to transcription, coding and layout were identified and combined with the above-mentioned.

Deductive and inductive processes were used during the data analysis, however, and due to the state of art of this topic, the majority of the categories and processes were inductively shaped. The main focus of analysis was the stimulated recall sessions. Nevertheless, the research journal kept during the observation and recording phase, as well as the video recordings, was used to clarify events and understand data.

In addition, due to the exploratory gist of this study and the complexity of the topic, it was decided that all moments of gratitude highlighted by the teacher, the coder and the researcher were to be taken into account. From these moments, two different types of moments of gratitude were identified and defined by specific conditions. Retrospective moments, which are the verbal accounts where the teacher was able to remember what she/he was thinking related to a specific grateful moment. These kinds of utterances are clear references to inner thoughts and to the use of phrases such as “I was thinking” or “I thought” at the beginning of a reply or a sentence. However, these phrases could also be combined with verbs in the present tense referring to past moments.

The non-retrospective moments of gratitude were the other type of accounts identified. These moments are of reflective and descriptive nature and they are identified by phrases beginning with “I was”, followed by a different verb, other than think (i.e. ‘I was trying to explain him’). Most importantly, if teachers used the verb ‘think’ in any of its conjugations but the sentences did not express their own ideas related to the stimulated recall, (i.e. ‘I thought he was talking’) the verbs were also considered as part of these moments. The last feature of these moments was that they started the idea or sentence referring to feelings.

The retrospective moments of gratitude shaped categories and main moments related to gratitude, however, the non-retrospective shaped and supported the question about the meaning of gratitude within school contexts.

Thirty three retrospective moments and sixteen non-retrospective moments of gratitude were found within both of the recordings. From the retrospective accounts, five

were rejected due to the criteria already mentioned resulting in twenty-eight retrospective moments of gratitude from which the results were obtained.

From such retrospective moments, it is important to notice that due to the methodological procedures, specifically the segmentation and the development of coding schemes (Chi, 1997), it was possible to find different categories within the same moment. This in turn, helps to have and identify a more accurate understanding of each moment of gratitude.

Once the data was analyzed and once the categories emerged, there was an interrater reliability test (Gass & Mackey, 2000) without calculation of percentage due to the amount of situations found in this study. For this reliability stage, as suggested by Gass and Mackey (2000), it was necessary to use rater not related with the research, in this case —a Finnish native speaker. Information about the procedures and the videos were provided for this stage. It is important to mention that the rater was asked to just look at the specific events being recalled to enhance the ethical scope of the research.

The task of the rater was to categorize the different events evoked in the stimulated recall sessions according to the categories derived from the verbal analysis performed by the researcher. Following, a discussion took part between the researcher and the rater to negotiate about the results.

The main outcomes of the mentioned processes are depicted and described in the following sections in order to respond to the aims of this study.

## **9 Results**

The understanding of gratitude arose from the open questions at the end of the stimulated recall interview. Although, as teachers reported, it was a difficult concept for them, gratitude was understood as a basic and everyday feeling experienced in different ways by people.

Both teachers related the concept of gratitude with happiness and joy. However, one of them recognized that gratitude is always related to some kind of source to which one is grateful. As it was reported, “you can be happy in general but I think that when you are grateful, you have to be grateful for somebody, for some reason” (PT).



The other teacher related gratitude with how to enjoy life and everyday events that happen in it. For this teacher, gratitude is “not connected to be waiting for something in the future, ‘I’ll be happy when I’ll get rich, or when I get new car, or have paid my last loan’ or something like that. But it’s something we can see in everyday life” (PT).

Additionally, and with the help of reflective accounts regarding the question “could you please refer some situations when you have felt gratitude?” both teachers expressed that gratitude is an experience that comes after a difficulty or in situations of pressure. But also, gratitude was reported to be experienced when they received, “I have felt [...] gratitude when I have wrote to my friend and she understood me” (PT) or gave, “When I’m listening and someone is asking help from me” (PT), help.

In reference to the previous paragraph, gratitude seems to be conceived also as an interindividual or interpersonal experience. This is also supported by the results that follow this section since all of the chosen situations were explained by teachers as circumstances in which the child, or the teacher were grateful towards someone else and not towards non-human sources such as the weather, school activities, or day schedules.

When teachers were asked about the significance of helping students to recognize, feel and express gratitude, both teachers answered that it was important to do it. The main identified idea that supported such answer is that gratitude is a stable and basic element and that it is the counterpart of the rapid change of reality, as well as the taken for granted feelings. As expressed by the teachers: “we can’t trust the economic situation in the world. It’s going worst. And we have to have something more, some basic elements in our lives that carry us” (PT) and thus “we need to show and teach the kids too that they have to be thankful for things” (PT).

In accordance with these statements, teachers expressed different ideas on how to help students to recognize, feel or express gratitude. Both teachers agreed with the idea that they have to teach how to demonstrate gratefulness within an everyday situation context. As one of them reported:

Every day, for example we remind them that, you have to say “thank you” when you’re eating, you have to say “thank you” for the food and so on; and “thank you” for the mates, the friends that they give you something, you have to say “thank you” and so on (PT).

However, none of the twenty-eight moments identified during the stimulated recall interview were implicit situations in which gratitude would have been encouraged or explained by the teacher.

From the twenty-eight moments reviewed during the interrater reliability test, fifteen were categorized according to the analysis performed by the researcher. Eight retrospections were reviewed and discussed with the rater by explaining reasons for the categorization and, after reaching an agreement, they all remained as the researcher classified them earlier. Finally, five moments were re-categorized according to the discussion with the rater and due to this, two initial moments were eliminated. The areas remained the same and the results are presented in the following.

Seven broad areas emerged from the different opportunities or situations for the expression of gratitude, namely competence, everyday routines, learning strategies, empathy, classroom and class tools, emotions and time. Each of them will be commented and some examples will be provided by giving a small summary of the events from each description given by the teachers and the researcher.

## **9.1 Everyday routines**

The teachers' everyday routine referred to daily formalisms occurring in the beginning, at the end of or during the class. Six different accounts were found from which two main categories were identified (see table 1). The first one is daily communication situations, which can be identified under a routine reception of favours or services in social situations.

Within this category, there was a retrospection from an identified moment of gratitude. The event occurred while the students were working individually on a task at their desks. Owen, a student, noticed he did not have a yellow-coloured pencil and asked his teacher for one. The teacher gave him the color and the pupil went back to his place to continue working.

For this event, the teacher found the expression "you can do like this" (PT), and referred that this type of actions are normal communicational life which implicitly provide information about the context where gratitude can be expressed.

Within the everyday routines, another category was found. It had four teachers' related retrospections. This is called care/affection. Situations belonging to this group are

characterized by an individual taking active concern of other'(s') well-being through verbal or non-verbal actions in the frame of classroom activities.

Almost all cases happened when a formal class was over and there was some type of demonstration of care towards the other. The moment chosen within the framework of the formal class used an implicit demonstration of care by recognizing the pupil's characteristics and background while helping to work on a task. For these moments, all retrospections reflect physical, emotional and cognitive well-being with the classroom life or activities.

## **9.2 Learning strategies**

Another area identified according to the teacher's retrospections was the one related to the strategies used by him/her in order to help understand specific contents related to the subject of the class, namely learning strategies. Five different moments were recognized in this area from which three different categories emerged (see table 2).

The first category identified is a "flipping" entity used by individuals to turn a specific idea or contribution from other(s) into a useful element for his/her speech within the framework of an activity or content explanation. This can be exemplified with two events where Alfred expressed ideas while the teacher explained something related to the subject of the class. His comment "this is too easy, I know this" leads the teacher to think "I take that comment and turn it into something good" and helps the teacher provide a positive feedback, therefore, prompting a grateful situation.

A second category in this area is called involve, which is developed when an individual attracts or keeps the interest of other(s) while an explanation of an activity is undergoing. This might occur only in those occasions when it is necessary to give an explanation to a group of pupils or classmates. In this case, the moment happened when the teacher explained something related to mathematics to the whole group.

Both moments belonging to this category happened within the same activity; nonetheless, one of them was taking into account group interests and is related with the teachers' own experience, while the other occurred by taking a pupil's participation to keep the interest of the group. As reported by the teacher, this could prompt gratitude from the

Table 1  
Everyday Routines Area

Event participants	Event description by researcher	Event description by the teacher during stimulated recall	Retrospection	More or background information about the event	Situation
Owen and teacher	After approaching to the teacher's desk, Owen waits for the teacher before addressing him because the teacher one is helping Angela. Owen leans on the teacher's desk while he waits and after Angela leaves, he says something to the teacher. After that, the teacher nods, stands up and goes to the back shelf of the blackboard. Owen stays at the teacher's desk while the teacher picks up a yellow pencil and gives it to him. Owen takes the pencil and goes back to his place while staring at the pencil for a couple of seconds.	"He had some problems with oh yes! He needed yellow colour but he didn't have it. So I said that 'I have some extra pencils' so I gave it to him"	"[N]othing very special, just 'you can do like this' "	"That's normal life, normal communication"	Daily communication
Eugenia and teacher	After helping George, the teacher goes with Eugenia to the other side of the desk. Eugenia had raised her hand a couple of minutes before until the teacher approached her. The teacher helps her with the task in her notebook by bowing towards her and speaking in a low voice.	[Teacher describes Eugenia's thoughts] "I wait, I wait and now it's finally my turn. Teacher is here and now I can tell my thing"	"I thought 'little Eugenia, poor Eugenia. She's been sick and I have to help her because she has two or three extra pages to do."	Teacher reported that Eugenia was sick for 1 or 2 days, which forced the girl to miss some classes and to catch up her classmates.	Care/affection
Eugenia and teacher	It is almost the end of the lesson and the teacher takes a notebook where the names of each of the pupils are. The teacher is standing close to her desk. After that, all students go to the back part of the classroom and make a line to say goodbye to the teacher. Each one passes and says good bye to the teacher and leaves the classroom. When is Eugenia's turn, she hugs the teacher without saying anything and the teacher hugs her as well and says something to Eugenia. The hug does not last long and after that, the teacher continues to say goodbye to the next child.	"This is a routine for us. [E]very day you can shake hands or give hug or then you can just say "bye, bye". So everyday there is a few girls who want to hug and usually boys just want to shake (teacher laughs) hands."	"I was very glad that 'Eugenia is back at school again, because she was ill and now she's well' "	"I'm very happy that the kids feel that they can hug me and I'm not frightening and so on."	Care/affection

Table 1  
*Everyday Routines Area (Continuation)*

Event participants	Event description by researcher	Event description by teacher during stimulated recall	Retrospection	More or background information about the event	Situation
Layla and teacher	While in line to leave the classroom, the teacher hugs several students, first Eugenia and then, Layla. While hugging them, the teacher seems to say good bye to Layla and there is no reply from her. After some seconds of hugging, Layla leaves the classroom.	Related to Eugenia's previous hug	"I thought 'Layla is so little and cute and I love her, and she's very good pupil' "	"She doesn't cause any problems, she's a very nice kid"	Care/affection
Laura and teacher	Only Rachel, Laura and the teacher remain in the classroom. The teacher is organizing the shelves while Laura keeps close to her as if waiting for something. Laura raises both her hands as denoting she is waiting for the teacher to finish what she is doing. The teacher puts some boxes in her shelf and turns to Laura who calmly steps towards the teacher and hugs her.	No explicit description	"I was very pleased to show her love and I started to think 'how could I help her much?', how could I help her to learn something new?' "	"I think that she was grateful am...I showed her attention and she is happy to be in the class, even though she feels that she hasn't learn (Teacher laughs) anything new, because she's so talented"	Care/affection

students for designing stimulating activities but also it makes the teacher to experience gratefulness for his/her professional history.

### 9.3 Empathy

An area associated with empathy emerged from the teacher's retrospections. This is related to academic or emotional responses or actions connecting an individual with other(s) by the process of putting the self in the other(s), or the "*feeling with others*" (italics in original, Saarni, 1999, p. 163).

This area was the one with most of the events: seven of the teachers' retrospections from different moments of gratitude identified in the classroom (see table 3). Also, it allocates the most events where the whole classroom, including the teacher, is participating in the event. From here, three different categories were identified and appeared to give sense to empathic incidents related with gratitude.

A first category within this area links processes, whether verbally or non-verbally, to specify a need in a particular situation. It provides information to other(s) about possible ways to act according to the need. The retrospection that shaped this first category occurred when the teacher experienced a difficult situation within the frame of a question linked to the subject.

The teacher asked the children to behave in a certain way and thought about the difficulty to execute an activity within harsh conditions. The need of change was implicitly expressed in the phrase "kiitos" (thank you in Finnish) which also

It's thank you for [them]. It's also thank you but I made them understand 'I'm thankful for you if you do like I said. [...] And when you do it, you are listening and doing it like I say it feels good for me' (PT).

Within this area, a group related emerged. This was during an activity resolution in which individuals put themselves in the other(s)' shoes by considering the others' skills or background to act in a specific way in order to solve the situation. The decision to act in order to solve a problem is the reason why this category is related to a more sympathetic process.

Table 2  
Learning Strategies Area

Event participants	Event description by researcher	Event description by teacher during stimulated recall	Retrospection	More or background information about the event	Situation
Alfred and teacher	While in front of the classroom, the teacher is saying something to his class. He then seems to tell a joke because he laughs and suddenly Alfred says something aloud. The teacher seems to take the comment into account, replies to it and continues with the class.	"In that moment I took Alfred['s], because at many times he's saying 'this is too easy, I know this' and now he also made a comment about how this was not difficult 'this is like addition' [Alfred said]. And at that moment I said 'Alfred, was very right in that thing, what he just said' "	"I thought 'I take that comment and turn it into something good' "	The teacher referred that Alfred had problems focusing as well as some problems with other pupils. "It's not easy for him to wait for his turn" "I believe that when I give positive feedback it helps him to go away from his uncertainty, what is behind his behaviour" Alfred is grateful because the teacher gives him a positive feedback "between me and him there is something because I give him positive feedback"	Reframe
Alfred and teacher	The teacher is explaining something to the whole classroom and most of the students are sitting in their places but not all are paying attention to what the teacher says. The teacher projects images and continues with the class. Alfred says something apparently related to said the class and the teacher continues talking.	"Alfred said 'yes because it's easy to know' that 'I can... because when we make a subtraction then we can count backwards to verify it'. There, I realized that 'I can tell them now because of Alfred's comment' and I told them this was something we can learn at 2 <sup>nd</sup> , 3 <sup>rd</sup> , 4 <sup>th</sup> or 5 <sup>th</sup> class. Not yet, but is nice to know. That's why I was laughing. I felt it was good to tell. And Alfred said that 'that's easy to know' and I said that 'yes, it is easy to know. But sometimes you can tell it to a bigger pupil or to your older brother or sister' "	"I can tell them now because of Alfred's comment"	The teacher referred that Alfred had problems focusing as well as some problems with other pupils. "It's not easy for him to wait for his turn" "I believe that when I give positive feedback it helps him to go away from his uncertainty, what is behind his behaviour" Alfred is grateful because the teacher gives him a positive feedback "between me and him there is something because I give him positive feedback"	Reframe

Table 2  
Learning Strategies Area (Continuation)

Event participants	Event description by researcher	Event description by teacher during stimulated recall	Retrospection	More or background information about the event	Situation
Whole group and teacher	The teacher is addressing to the whole group while everybody is talking and seated in their places. The teacher takes a box of eggs and shows it to the group and asks the group to remain silent. Then, the teacher shows the students some artificial eggs from the box and starts counting them aloud with them. They count 5 eggs and the teacher starts to tell a story. While the teacher tells the story, the children seem to be engaged with it and the teacher goes through the first and second rows of desks. Suddenly, while walking back to the front of the classroom, the teacher drops off some eggs from the box and the children smile and laugh about it. The teacher expresses surprise and then invites the students to count with him how many eggs are remaining in the box.	"It's a story about how a little girl is helping her mom by going to shopping after school. And that tells more than maths. Tells about helping each other and those kind of things, and emotions also"	"I was thinking 'how to....how to...how to tell it in clear way so that it's interesting but not too long'"	"I felt it was something between us and I felt gratitude also for my history or some memories from when I was a young teacher for the first time."	Involve
Abbey and teacher	During a story telling in front of the classroom, the teacher named Abbey as a character in the story. When the teacher mentioned Abbey's name she seemed to be surprised and after some seconds, the teacher smiled turning around to see her students on the same row of desks. At the same time she seemed ashamed because she put both of her hands close to her eyes as if she were holding her head with them.	"I added this Abbey, this girl (pointing Abbey in the screen) for my story. So the girl (referring to the girl in the story) meets, when she goes from shop to home, Abbey [who] is sitting in the park reading book and they start [talking]"	"I thought that 'it keeps them interested to my story more than..., it's something connected to them' "	"I think this was a very good point to keep them awake and happy. Take someone from the classroom to my story. And Abbey was smiling, and for her it was ok."	Involve



Four different retrospections helped to build and to give a name to this group. All of them have the characteristic of action decision due to the background information related to an individual student or to the whole group. A particular situation was when the teacher used a relatively new activity for the group to solve a task related to the subject and, seeing the student's need to have solving tools, the teacher proposes a specific technique for the aim of the task. This situation found a retrospection that was expressed by the teacher as "I thought 'they need help and some clues in order to do this' " (PT).

A last category, inspired by Howells' (Howells, 2012, 2014; Howells & Cumming, 2012) work, under this area received the name of give-receive back through which individuals establish a reciprocal relation within the frame of an activity by considering other's backgrounds and particular desires or expectations. This is also related to behavioural standard and task accomplishment with the thoughts of giving a specific reward.

Two different situations were identified: they are characterized by the accomplishment of certain task done by a student, and at the same time a reward from the teacher. Nonetheless, they do not only involve a simple accomplishment and rewarding of a task but also the teacher's recognition from the individual's specific needs to continue working in the classroom context.

The retrospection "great, he has done his work and I'm very happy to give him the reward he has waited for so long" (PT) seems to clearly depict this category and helps to explain its relation to the area of empathy.

## **9.4 Time**

The time area arose from the retrospections from the participating teachers. The area includes situations related to time administration when help is provided. This also allocates seven moments from which two different categories emerged (see table 4).

The first group is related to moments when an individual recognizes the need of responsiveness from other(s) in affective or academic scopes. This is the attention category. Four different retrospections were identified within this category and they all express the need of responsiveness or help from the other.

Table 3  
Empathy Area

Event participants	Event description by researcher	Event description by teacher during stimulated recall	Retrospection	More or background information about the event	Situation
Whole classroom (including the teacher)	While in front of the classroom and projecting an image, the teacher seems to ask something from the whole group and several students started to answer shouting. The teacher then asked them for silence and says something.	"[T]hey wanted to say the answer without raising the hand. So I said to them that 'raise your hand please, kiitos [Thank you in Finnish]' "	"I thought 'that's difficult' "	"It's thank you for [them]. It's also thank you but I made them understand 'I'm thankful for you if you do like I said' [...] And when you do it, you are listening and doing it like I say it feels good for me' "	Seek
George and teacher	After hushing Albert and other children who were talking during their tasks, the teacher walked towards George, who asked him for help in his exercises by touching the teacher from the back. The teacher took his pencil and started making some notes on George's book, apparently checking the exercises. After the small evaluation, the teacher explained with his own hand and fingers how the calculation should be solved.	"George waits and waits and then (pause) after a while [...] I'll come with him and he shows gratitude when gets help at last. [B]ecause I checked every little things in his exercise so I could mark right or wrong"	"I thought 'how difficult can this am...[...]be to him' "	"I thought he felt thankful for me because I helped him and without words I supported him and showed [how to solve the task]"  The teacher also referred George has had some problems with his emotions, which is the reason of his gratitude.	Sympathetic

Table 3  
Empathy Area (Continuation)

Event participants	Event description by researcher	Event description by teacher during stimulated recall	Retrospection	More or background information about the event	Situation
Rachel and teacher	The class is over and the only remaining people are the teacher, Laura and Rachel. Rachel and the teacher walk towards Rachel's desk. The teacher sits down and Rachel is standing. Both look at a small notebook and the teacher opens it and starts writing something while Rachel looks at it. The teacher finishes writing, turns to Rachel and nods to her. The teacher then turns looking for something besides her desk and finds colorful stamp and puts one in the small notebook. She shows it to Rachel and the girl smiles and makes a joyful expression. The teacher then hugs the girl and Rachel responds effusively to the hug.	"[S]he has her own [...] notebook and every day when the day is great and she behaves well she gets a stamp and when no then no stamp. [...] And now because the day was maybe good I give her a stamp"	"I was very happy that 'this day was good because I want to give her every time that stamp because it's very sad, and it's not good for me either if she gets punished' "	"She's very grateful, very very grateful and relieved. Because yesterday, Tuesday was not so good and I had to write a [...] note for parents and she got punishment so she's very grateful because when she gets maybe 10 stamps the parents will get her to movie, or something like that. And [...] stamps is every valuable for her."	Sympathetic
Whole classroom (including the teacher)	While most of the students are working in their own desks, the teacher walks among the last rows of desks checking if everybody is working on their task. Then, the students start to call the teacher several times in order to get some help from him. When this happens, the teacher goes to the desk of the student who asked for help.	No explicit explanation, "they are asking me help"	"I thought 'oh my god! This is very difficult!'"	"They trust me and can ask me for help" "It's not connected to the subject but it is connected to the relation between us"	Sympathetic

Table 3  
*Empathy Area (Continuation)*

Event participants	Event description by researcher	Event description by teacher during stimulated recall	Retrospection	More or background information about the event	Situation
Whole classroom (including the teacher)	While the teacher is sitting at his desk he addresses the students and reads something from the book , which is in the screen of the classroom's projector. In a normal and calm voice he starts saying things to the students and then starts using his hands to count how many pieces of objects the book is referring to. Meanwhile, some students are counting using the same method with their own fingers. After counting, the teacher asks something to the students and most of them start to write on their book while using their fingers to solve the calculation.	"[T]his was a new situation for pupils because this was the second time when they have these kind of math problems that they had to listen and write the answer on their books and that kind of vocal work. So it's very new situation to them. And so in somehow I felt that in that moment, when I said that 'you can use your own fingers also to do it' It makes them a bit easier and comfortable"	"I thought 'they need help and some clues to do this' "	"Is our own job to do this together. Not like everyone is doing it alone and fearing to have wrong answers and teacher's judgment." "[I]t's maybe connected to some kind of feelings or what will I do in that case if I'm pupil?', what do I need for help?"	Sympathetic
Arthur and teacher	After helping a student from the front row of the classroom, the teacher goes to the back rows and talks to Arthur. While saying something, the teacher opens Arthur's lift lid desk and puts a book inside. The teacher seems to suggest something to Arthur and immediately leaves from his place. At the same time, the teacher leaves, Arthur follows her with his gaze, stands up and leaves the classroom.	"Arthur is very happy and grateful that now his work is done and I gave him, and only him, the permission to go to the little amm.. library and he can get something to read or something like that"	"[G]reat, he has done his work and I'm very happy to give him the reward he has waited for so long"	The reward the teacher gave to Arthur is only for him and according to the teacher, it encourages the child's gratitude.	Give-receive

Table 3  
*Empathy Area (Continuation)*

<b>Event participants</b>	<b>Event description by researcher</b>	<b>Event description by teacher during stimulated recall</b>	<b>Retrospection</b>	<b>More or background information about the event</b>	<b>Situation</b>
Arthur and teacher	Arthur seems to be desperate and starts to make faces and signals to the recording camera. At the same time, when the teacher finishes helping other students, she goes back to her desk but on her way notices Arthur's attitude and stops his movements and offers to help him with his work. The teacher seems to check his work and gives him some instructions, then leaves from his desk.	"He is happy and thankful to have again [attention]. I said something that 'very good you are very good at maths. And you have done almost everything ready, and after this you can go out and play, just a little while'"	"I thought I'm very happy and pleased with Arthur because he has done very hard work during the lesson and he has behave very well and... the operations were correct"	According to the teacher, Arthur is a kid that needs rewards and motivation "when you've done this, you can do this".	Give-receive

They were all moments when students asked for attention, for example, being listened to or noticing their presence. For instance, Rachel said something to the teacher, and after being listened and comforted, she went back to her desk. In the participating teacher's words "She only wanted the teacher to give her a little bit of attention and then she could continue". This context and situation seems to trigger in the girl experiences of gratitude because she responded to the need of being noticed in a specific situation.

Another characteristic from these moments is that there is a waiting period where students express their need of attention by calling teacher's name or just keep their raised hand because teacher has something else to do.

A related event that seems to provide meaning to this area of time is the "on time" category. This happens when an individual recognizes the need of academic help by considering other(s) background(s) as well as imaginary consequences of the lack of support.

Unlike the attention group, and according to both the teacher's retrospections and the situations, this process ponders different consequences of providing help or not when help is believed to be needed. The expression found for the retrospection "I'm happy to help her over the (pause) mountains" (PT) links the child's need to get help and the teacher's belief noticed in the following phrase: "I was very happy that I was...so to say in time there before she got the depression" (PT).

## **9.5 Classroom and class tools**

An area related to classroom's material or strategic resources and/or their management was built through the retrospections found for an identified moment of gratitude. This area is called classroom and class tools.

A retrospection helped naming a type of event that appears to function within this area, namely the material awareness category. The retrospection belonging to it (see table 5) is part of a situation where a small girl, Rachel, asks the teacher to give her a tool to work with for the following classroom activities. Rachel lost the same type of tool, an eraser, quite many times and the teacher highlighted this fact when she said to her "ok, now I last time, I give to you and now keep it very very safe in your pocket" to which Rachel replies she will not lose it again.

Table 4  
Time Area

Event participants	Event description by researcher	Event description by teacher during stimulated recall	Retrospection	More or background information about the event	Situation
Rachel and teacher	While the teacher is instructing Arthur G. to pick up a book from somewhere behind the classroom, Rachel approaches and touches her with one hand. As a response, the teacher bows towards Rachel and listens to her. While holding Rachel with one hand, the teacher listens to her for few seconds and continues the lesson while Rachel goes back to her place.	"I noticed her at that moment and I gave her the little, little time she needed of attention." "I think the thing she says is not important. She only wants that teacher gives her a little bit attention and then she can continue. She is very pleased to have a little hug and then she can start the work"	"I thought 'My little Rachel, again here, she's always coming' "	"I think she felt gratefulness because I noticed her at that moment and I gave her the little, little time she needed of attention."  The teacher also reported she tried to give extra attention to Rachel because the girl did something wrong at school and she felt guilty about that.	Attention
Whole classroom (including the teacher)	While most of the students are working in their own desks, the teacher walks among the last rows of desks checking if everybody is working on the task. Then, the students start to call the teacher's name for several occasions in order to get some help from him. When this happens, the teacher goes to the place of the pupil who asked for help.	No explicit explanation "they are asking me help"	I also thought 'I don't want to use my special tricks I have to keep them quiet' like marking blue stars to the board for one group"	"They trust me and can ask help" "It's not connected to the subject but is connected to the relation between us"	Attention

Table 4  
Time Area (Continuation)

Event participants	Event description by researcher	Event description by teacher during stimulated recall	Retrospection	More or background information about the event	Situation
Arthur G. and teacher	After noticing, at the beginning of the activity, that Arthur G. didn't have the math book, the teacher gave him another paper with a different task. Several minutes later, Arthur G. is talking to one of his classmates while everybody else in the classroom seem to be working on their tasks. The teacher then goes and gently holds Arthur G. and whispers something related to his task to him. After giving him instructions, the teacher leaves and Arthur G. continues working.	"He shows gratitude while he has been waiting for my help [...] for long time and he enjoys the am.. how to say it... when he gets the total attention from an adult"	"I thought I'm very happy that he is doing something, he is doing really the task I wanted him to do and he is not doing something totally else, and not wondering walking through the class' "	<p>Arthur G. was waiting for a long time and, knowing his needs, the teacher acknowledged his work as well as the waiting time.</p> <p>The teacher reported that Arthur G. went to the class for the second time and she acknowledged that he made a great effort.</p> <p>The teacher reported to be grateful for Arthur G's effort as well as for the effort of his former teachers.</p>	Attention
Eugenia and teacher	After helping George, the teacher went with Eugenia to the other side of their desk. Eugenia had been raising her hand for a couple of minutes until the teacher arrived with her. The teacher helped her solving the task on her notebook by leaning towards her and giving her instructions in a low voice.	[The teacher described Eugenia's thoughts] "I wait, I wait and now it's finally my turn. The teacher is here and now I can tell my thing"	<p>"[S]o I automatically think that 'now I have to give everything [so] that she [...] can get the help she needs'."</p> <p>"Oh! I have to go quickly so that she can quickly go further"</p>	<p>"Because she has been waiting for a long time to have help[...]. [She] needs extra support, extra control, extra [push] so that she could do things better".</p> <p>The teacher reported that Eugenia was sick for 1 or 2 days and he missed some classes so she had to catch up with her classmates.</p>	<p>Attention</p> <p>On time</p>



Table 4  
Time Area (Continuation)

Event participants	Event description by researcher	Event description by teacher during stimulated recall	Retrospection	More or background information about the event	Situation
Paula and teacher	The teacher arrives to Paula's desk and the girl gives the teacher her pencil while moving and pointing in her book the task where she needs help. The teacher says something and seems to focus on what the teacher is doing in the book. Both whisper to each other. The teacher then kneels and with her hand seems to help Paula to solve the task. With her body language Paula seems to be relieved and also realizes about how easy the task was while the teacher leaves to continue helping other students.	"I think that Paula shows relieve and some kind of gratitude when I'm helping her with the task"	"I thought 'I'm happy to help her over the (pause) mountains"	The teacher reported that Paula has showed problems to handle emotions of stress or anger. Due to these problems, the teacher mentioned "I was very happy that I was...so to say in time there before she got the depression"	On time
Arthur and teacher	The teacher walked towards Arthur and he seemed to explain something about the task. He listened to the teacher with attention and asked some questions. Meanwhile, Eugenia and George turned back and looked at them. Eugenia and George seemed to be interested on what the teacher was doing in Arthur's book.	"I went to him and he got attention and the next instruction (referring to the next task)"	"I thought 'oh!, very good that I'm on time again because if I would come late he would lie on the floor and get noisy and disturb the others and something like that"	"[H]e has had a lot of problems in the kinder garden and I have empathy towards him I want to help him and get him the feeling that 'I'm all right and I'm good'. And , his self-esteem is very low, I want to give him very much to do so that he can be active and have positive feedback, not always the negative that 'don't, don't do that, don't do that' that I can give him thanks that 'Ok wow, you have done this things' ”	On time

The teacher's retrospection regarding this moment is expressed as follows: "Oh no!, this must be the last time I give eraser to her because I don't have any [...] anymore, because they all have gone". Both the specific comment and the situation seem to prompt some kind of awareness in the girl about the cost of the rubber for the teacher and at the end she experiences gratitude.

## **9.6 Competence**

Another area with one identified moment of gratitude was the competence area, which can be described as the area related to skills. Specifically, it is related with the teacher's retrospective accounts related to own or other(s) skills or characteristics in a specific context of activity.

This area can be illustrated with the moment of gratitude when a participating teacher, with the help of a student, was able to recognize something from the lesson book she did not recognize while she was reading and explaining the text. The retrospection from this specific moment expresses the mentioned, "how I could not have seen that?!" (See table 6).

Moreover, the teacher's explanation of the account also helps understanding and giving characteristic to the category belonging to this area. According to the participating teacher, "kids are still quick to see things [...] that I can't see", this is then a recognition about the lack of a specific skill which can be regarded as a metacognitive exercise within this area.

Thus the group under the competence area is named as skill-cognizant. Defined as and with the help of all the above, a metacognitive situation where the individual recognizes own skills and/or performance during the classroom activities.

## **9.7 Emotions**

Finally an area emerged from the moments of gratitude where the teachers' retrospections have the common feature of the awareness of their own emotions or other's(s') emotions within a specific context of activity. The area of emotions is the last area that allocates the other two categories where gratitude is experienced within the class-

Table 5  
Classroom and Class Tools Area

Event participants	Event description by researcher	Event description by teacher during stimulated recall	Retrospection	More or background information about the event	Situation
Rachel and teacher	Only Laura, Rachel and the teacher remain in the classroom. Rachel walks from the back of the classroom to her desk. She seems to hold something with her left hand and the teacher, who was in the back part of the classroom -not so far from Rachel-, seems to talk about the object Rachel is holding. Rachel shows a rubber in her left hand and the teacher approaches to her calmly. Then Rachel lifts her desk lid while the teacher is walking towards her and helps her to keep the desk open while she says something to her. Rachel replies back and puts something inside her desk. Then the girl closes the desk and says goodbye to teacher.	"She's grateful because [...] she has lost many of them and then she asks 'can I keep this?' and then I said 'ok, now I, last time, [...] give to you and now keep it very, very safe in your pocket' and she is happy 'ok, thank you and now I won't [lose it again]' she said."	"I thought 'Oh no, this must be the last time I give it because I don't have any eraser anymore, because they all have gone' (the teacher laughs)"	The girl is grateful for the rubber the teacher gave to her. She knows that the teacher has given her many of them before.	Material awareness

Table 6  
Competence Area

Event participants	Event description by researcher	Event description by teacher during stimulated recall	Retrospection	More or background information about the event	Situation
Whole classroom (including the teacher)	The teacher starts to read a segment from the lesson book and seems to describe something from it. She mentions the names of the characters and stops after mentioning all of them. Suddenly, a voice raises saying one name. Amazed, the teacher replies and there is small conversation, with Maria apparently, about the topic. The teacher seems to be happy about the event and continues with the activity.	"Here I'm very noticing the person on the book that I didn't see (referring to the course book). [...] one kid said 'there is also Wenlla' and I said 'Oh I didn't noticed that, thank you very much' "	"I thought that 'how I could not have seen that?!' "	"And I'm very grateful that the kids are still a.. quick to.. see things [...] that I can't see"	Skill-cognizant

rooms (See table 7).

The first area is related to supportive situations used to provide implicit and specific emotional cues to make the other(s) feel competent in certain activity or task by considering his/her background. This merges concepts that are related to the emotional life such as love or happiness, and the academic scope in order to encourage other(s) to do or continue doing something.

The two moments belonging to this scope find the retrospection from the teacher where giving motivation and support for a specific student is a specific characteristic. Both retrospections are expressed so that they encourage the student to finish a task and feel good about it. The thoughts expressed such as "I'm trying to support him, and to give him attention, and love, and everything that he could feel himself good and so on" (PT) and "I want to give him motivation to do it, write the page and 'till the end!" (PT) reflect the teacher's background and situation understanding of children.

Another category in this area is related to recognition about self-emotions during the classroom activities. This is a metacognitive process that happened after the resolution of a situation.

One case falls into this category. This is a resolution situation where the teacher had to provide more tasks to the students because most of them had finished the previous work. The retrospection "this is good solution because I can go away from classroom to take some extra copies [...] because this takes more time. And I haven't prepared this situation beforehand" (PT) seems to depict the process through which the teacher is able to recognize own emotions, redirect them and give instructions to the children in a different manner: 'what if we do like this?' and I said it as if it's not something I want them to do, but is our job" (PT).

## **9.8 A complementary category**

While the participating teachers were being interviewed for the stimulated recall, it was common that, in order to explain the moments of gratitude, the teachers gave background information about the child with whom the interaction was being under scrutiny. This was

Table 7  
Emotions Area

Event participants	Event description by researcher	Event description by teacher during stimulated recall	Retrospection	More or background information about the event	Situation
George and teacher	After hushing Albert and other children who were talking during their tasks, the teacher goes close to George, who asks him for help in his exercises by touching the teacher from the back. The teacher takes his pencil and starts making some notes on George's book, apparently checking the exercises. After the small evaluation the teacher explains with his own hand about how the calculation should be done.	"George waits and waits and then (pause) after a while [...] I'll come with him and he shows gratitude when gets help at last. [B]ecause I checked every little things in his exercise so I could remark right or wrong"	"I also thought 'I'm trying to support him, and to give him attention, and love, and everything that he could feel himself good and so on' "	"I thought he felt thankful for me because I helped him and without words I supported him and showed [how to do the task]"  The teacher also referred George has had some problems with his emotions being this the reason of his gratitude.	Supportive
Arthur and teacher	Arthur seems to be desperate and starts to make faces and signals to the recording camera. At the same time when the teacher finishes helping other students, she goes back to her desk but on her way she notices Arthur's attitude and stops him from moving and offers him help in his work. The teacher seems to check his work and give him some instructions with her hand then leaves from his place.	"He is happy and thankful to have again... I said something that very good you are very good at maths. And you have done almost everything ready, and after this you can go out and play, just a little while"	"And thought that 'I want to give him motivation to do it, write the page and 'till the end'"	According to the teacher, Arthur is a kid who needs rewards and motivation "when you've done this, you can do this". Teacher's understanding of this particular need seemed to prompt Arthur's gratitude.	Supportive

Table 7  
*Emotions Area (Continuation)*

Event participants	Event description by researcher	Event description by teacher during stimulated recall	Retrospection	More or background information about the event	Situation
Whole classroom (including the teacher)	While checking the exercises of three of his students at his desk, the teacher addresses to the entire group and projects something on the screen. The teacher says something and continues assessing three of his students at his own desk.	"Many pupils were ready already and I gave extra, something not so typical from me, so I gave them the opportunity to continue to next chapter and next lesson" "I said 'what if we do like this?' and I said it as if it's not something I want them to do, but is our job"	"I thought 'this is good solution because I can go away from classroom to take some extra copies (unintelligible) because this takes more time. And I haven't prepared this situation beforehand' "	"It was a positive way to say it [...] I was able to change my feelings from some frustration [...] to positive"	Emotion-cognizant

identified to be an interactive and specific give and receive of information regarding this background.

An evocative action that an individual was not expressing but was implicit in individuality and teacher was able to read and give meaning in the context of classroom activities. This is proposed to be an evocative biography which is considered for the teacher in order to define a moment of gratitude while a dyadic or group interaction is undergoing.

This is a complementary category because it was not expressed in the teacher's retrospections but it was a background to provide meaning to a certain action. An example can be depicted when the teacher assures that Rachel is grateful with her for giving her stamps that are valuable to her.

She's very grateful, very very grateful and relieved. Because, yesterday, Tuesday was not *so good* and I had to write a [...] note for parents and she got punishment so she's very grateful because when she gets maybe ten stamps the parents will get her to movie, or something like that. [Stamps are] every valuable for her (PT).

As previously suggested, this moment of gratitude was deployed during a sympathetic situation; however, the child's background gave the teacher an understanding of what could have been done in order to trigger the girl's feeling of gratitude. It is then, that the context seems to be a non-static background category, which involves both of the participants during this specific moment.

Another example in this evocative biography category can be noted in the interaction between the teacher and Eugenia. The different moments in which there is interaction between them were categorized in three different forms and in all of them, the teacher gave some background about the girl. Specifically, the teacher pointed out that due to the fact that the girl was away from school for two days the girl "needs extra support, extra control, extra [push] so that she could do things better" (PT).

Regarding the group interaction within these evocative moments, a case when the teacher and the whole classroom built a situation can be mentioned. This happened when a specific sympathetic moment occurred and considered the near past activities that the whole classroom had experienced together in terms of tasks. This was expressed, as "this was a new situation for pupils because this was the second time when they have this kind of math

problems that they have to listen and write the answer to their books and that kind of vocal work” (PT).

It is possible to discern then, that these are moments when the evocative biography considers events that occurred in the life of the child in a recent or far past time. Thus, there could be a differentiation between two kinds of evocative biographies: evocative proximal biography, which is related to the nearer past, and evocative distal biography, which considers events and the child’s characteristics which appear to be more distant.

Regarding these last types of evocative situations, it is possible to identify an instance within this investigation, categorized as reframe situations, when a participating teacher considered Alfred’s behaviour and concentration problems while the classroom activity was taking place. In the teacher’s words, "I believe that when I give positive feedback [reframe category] it helps him to go away from his uncertainty, what is behind his behaviour" (PT).

## **10 Discussion**

Gratitude is an interindividual process experienced when a positive feeling is associated with a benefactor after receiving a benefit, service or favour; creating a fertile ground for the repayment of the received benefits (Nelson et al., 2013). However, it is a cultural and contextual dependent process in need of constant refinement according to each individual (Howells, 2014).

In this work it was found that gratitude is conceived by both participating teachers as a basic and everyday feeling related to happiness and joy. The feeling of gratitude was related to receiving or giving a benefit or service in response of a need. This need supports the idea that gratitude is an interactive event, considering both the beneficiary and the benefactor’s experiences.(Algoe, in press; Algoe, Haidt & Gable, 2008; Baumgarten-Tramer, 1938).

However, both teachers gave different characteristics for this feeling which supports the idea that gratitude it is defined giving each individual (Howells, 2014). One of them implicitly agrees with the previously mentioned psychological definition, given by Nelson



et al. (2013); whereas, the other accepts the idea that gratitude emerges in situations where non-human are a cause of this feeling.

Although in this work was theoretically argued that gratitude is the expression of feelings, values, attitudes and beliefs (Berger, 1975; White, 1999) regarding other people with whom an individual interacts and exchanges favours, services or actions, the data in this study does not help in order to support such argument. This is due to the conceptual information provided by the teachers and the different moments chosen related to gratitude. In other words, literature and the practice of gratitude seem to be in need of a more accurate definition.

Another discrepancy was found in this work between what is theoretically proposed and the practice of gratitude. In this context and according to the collected data, none of the moments chosen by the teachers and the researcher used a specific kind of help to encourage, identify and experience gratitude with their students. This could question the theoretical assumptions that in educational contexts teachers are typically encouraging gratitude experiences (McAdams & Bauer, 2004). Nonetheless, and at the same time, this provides support for the main idea that gratitude is a cultural dependent process and highlights the need for more explicit support to experience this feeling.

The seven identified areas, the complementary category, and the different moments where gratitude is speculated to take part in the classroom, help to identify a complex understanding of gratitude within school environments. Moreover, this complex understanding is in light with the idea that gratitude is an inner attitude, which could be expressed towards something or someone during everyday life (Howells, 2012, 2014; Howells & Cumming, 2012).

Two of the different categories in this work are linked to Howells' (Howells, 2012, 2014; Howells & Cumming, 2012) framework regarding gratitude and school environment. The give-receive category supports her idea that a core element for the definition of gratitude in school setting is a "giving back" according to the context and the situation (Howells & Cumming, 2012). While the evocative biography category is linked to the idea that gratitude is an active process where the beneficiary and the benefactor play active roles in order to be able to experience and interpret social situations leading to openness and engagement.

In addition, the evocative biography category also helps understanding and supporting the thesis that gratitude is a contextual and situational phenomenon. The continuous interpreting from the participant teachers for the different proximal or distal events experienced by students seem to refine and contextualize gratitude according to each student. This helps creating a fertile ground for the experience of gratitude in this context.

Finally, the different opportunities for the expression of gratitude found in this work that lead to the emergence of categories bring a more clear understanding about the conception of gratitude in the classroom in a Finnish context. This could also provide insights for later work to unveil the different psychological mechanisms at stake when gratitude takes place in the classroom.

## **11 Limitations of the study**

As with any other study, there are limitations that have to be considered in order to understand and not to mislead the results from this work. One of the limitations is the language of both the researcher and the participating teachers. All the investigation was conducted in a non-native language, English, which could have affected in the understanding of the concept of gratitude as well as with the different explanations provided in the moments of gratitude.

Likewise, it is also important to recognize —and as it is suggested in this work’s framework— that culture has an important influence in the experience and understanding of gratitude. Therefore, and as part of different cultural environments, the participating teachers and the researcher might have an understanding of gratitude which could affect in the results and conclusions provided in this research.

Regarding the abovementioned, an important assumption was made while this investigation was performed. Although it has been argued that gratitude can be experienced by children of five years of age, variations between cultures and individuals might occur. The assumption that the children participating in this research are able to experience this feeling is important in order to be able to understand this work.

Regarding the method used, it is necessary to consider that all the moments of gratitude analyzed are from the perspective of the teacher. This leads to an important

limitation, for it does not provide accurate situations when children are indeed grateful, but rather moments when the participating teachers think the children are. This leads to a one-sided perspective of the whole phenomenon.

In addition, the one-hour video recording from each group might not reflect their daily experiences. As reported in the context section, teachers might have some aids to teach gratitude but they were not used while the research was taking place. Therefore it is important to be conscious that this research only studied specific situations, which might reflect only a small part of the reality.

Future research should consider the aforementioned limitations as well as the different results and categories where gratitude is speculated to take place in classroom environments. This, in order to explore the psychological mechanisms at stake during the moments of gratitude as well as to provide a holistic understanding of gratitude at school that will allow having a more refined concept of gratitude.

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