

STUDENTS WITH SPECIFIC LANGUAGE  
IMPAIRMENT IN ENGLISH EDUCATION:  
ENGLISH AND SPECIAL EDUCATION  
TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS

MASTER'S THESIS  
SANNA MIETTINEN

UNIVERSITY OF JYVÄSKYLÄ  
DEPARTMENT OF LANGUAGES

ENGLISH

MAY 2016

# ABSTRACT

## JYVÄSKYLÄN YLIOPISTO

Tiedekunta – Faculty Humanistinen tiedekunta	Laitos – Department Kielten laitos
Tekijä – Author Sanna Miettinen	
Työn nimi – Title Students with Specific Language Impairment in English education: English and special education teachers' perceptions	
Oppiaine – Subject Englanti	Työnlaji – Level Pro gradu
Aika – Month and Year Toukokuu 2016	Sivumäärä – Number of pages 87 + 4 liitettä
Tiivistelmä – Abstract <p>Tutkimuksen tavoitteena oli selvittää englannin opettajien ja erityisopettajien kokemuksia englannin opettamisesta oppilaille, joilla on kielellinen erityisvaikeus (aikaisemmin dysfasia, englanniksi specific language impairment). Tätä aihetta on tutkittu Suomessa hyvin vähän, mutta maailmanlaajuisesti aiheesta löytyy joitakin tutkimuksia (ks. esim. Malinen ym. 2013, Dockrell ja Lindsay 2001 &amp; Brackenreed 2010). Kielellisestä erityisvaikeudesta on saatavilla runsaasti tutkimusta ja tietoa, mutta opettajien opetuskokemuksista sitä löytyy huomattavasti vähemmän. Aihe on kiinnostava, koska noin 7 prosenttia lapsista kärsii kielellisestä erityisvaikeudesta, mikä on enemmän kuin esimerkiksi ADHD:sta kärsivien määrä. Lisäksi kielellisen erityisvaikeuden tiedetään olevan hyvin persistentti kielellinen vaikeus.</p> <p>Tutkimuksen keskeiset tutkimuskysymykset ovat seuraavat; kuinka opettajat suhtautuvat inklusioon ja segregatioon, kokevatko he saaneensa riittävästi tietoa kielellisestä erityisvaikeudesta, kuinka he kokevat pärjäävänsä oppilaiden kanssa, millaiseksi opettajat kuvailevat oppilaita, joilla on kielellinen erityisvaikeus, ja kuinka he ottavat oppilaiden erilaiset tarpeet huomioon ja eriyttävät opetusta. Tutkimuksen aineisto koostuu neljän englannin opettajan ja kolmen erityisopettajan haastatteluista. Haastattelut toteutettiin keväällä 2015 Keski- ja Itä-Suomessa.</p> <p>Tutkimuksen hypoteesi oli, että opettajat kokevat saaneensa hyvin vähän tietoa kielellisestä erityisvaikeudesta opettajankoulutuksessa, mutta he kokisivat selviytyvänsä siitä huolimatta. Tulokset osoittavat, että hypoteesi oli paikkaansa pitävä; kuusi seitsemästä opettajasta koki opettajankoulutuksen riittämättömänä, mutta kuitenkin tunsivat pärjäävänsä oppilaiden kanssa vähintäänkin melko hyvin. Lisäksi he suhtautuivat melko positiivisesti oppilaisiin, joilla on kielellinen erityisvaikeus, sekä heidän opettamiseensa. Tässä tutkimuksessa ilmi tulleet kokemukset voivat auttaa kehittämään opettajankoulutusta, niin että tietoa oppimisvaikeuksista tarjottaisiin enemmän myös aineenopettajille. Lisäksi opettajien käyttämät opetusmetodit ja eriyttämiskeinot auttavat ymmärtämään millaisia keinoja voidaan käyttää erilaisten oppijoiden kanssa. Lisätutkimusta kaivattaisiin alueellisten erojen, sukupuolten välisen erojen, ja noviisi opettajien kokemusten selvittämiseksi.</p>	

Asiasanat – Keywords SLI, English education, teachers' perceptions, inclusion

Säilytyspaikka – Depository JYX

Muita tietoja – Additional information

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT.....	1
<b>1. INTRODUCTION .....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>2 SPECIFIC LANGUAGE IMPAIRMENT AND ITS RELATION TO LANGUAGE LEARNING.....</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>2.1 Specific language impairment (SLI) .....</b>	<b>8</b>
2.1.1 Definition and criteria of SLI.....	8
2.1.2 Subtypes of SLI.....	10
2.1.3 Reasons of SLI .....	14
2.1.4 Researching SLI.....	16
<b>2.2 SLI and (foreign) language learning.....</b>	<b>18</b>
2.2.1 Attention and memory.....	18
2.2.2 SLI in Finnish language .....	19
2.2.3 Effects on different language areas .....	20
2.2.4 Language interventions for children with SLI .....	23
<b>3 CHILDREN WITH SLI IN THE FINNISH SCHOOL SYSTEM.....</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>3.1 Finnish basic education - from segregation to integration? .....</b>	<b>25</b>
3.1.1 National Core Curriculum for basic education 2004 .....	25
3.1.2 Amendments to the National Core Curriculum for basic education 2010 .....	28
3.1.3 National Core Curriculum for basic education 2014 .....	31
<b>3.2 Inclusive teaching .....</b>	<b>34</b>
3.2.1 What is inclusion?.....	34
3.2.2 How to organize inclusive teaching .....	36
3.2.3 Teachers' perception of coping in an inclusive classroom .....	39
<b>3.3 Research questions .....</b>	<b>41</b>
<b>4. THE PRESENT STUDY .....</b>	<b>42</b>
<b>4.1 Methods .....</b>	<b>42</b>
4.1.1 Data collection methods.....	42
4.1.2 Semi-structured interview .....	44
<b>4.2 Participants and data .....</b>	<b>45</b>
<b>4.3 Method of analysis.....</b>	<b>48</b>

<b>5 TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS OF TEACHING STUDENTS WITH SLI .....</b>	<b>51</b>
<b>5.1 Teachers' attitudes towards including and segregating students with SLI .....</b>	<b>51</b>
<b>5.2 Teachers' perception of self-efficacy and coping.....</b>	<b>55</b>
5.2.1 Knowledge and education about SLI .....	55
5.2.2 Perception of coping .....	58
<b>5.3 Characteristics of students with SLI.....</b>	<b>60</b>
5.3.1 Strengths of students with SLI .....	60
5.3.2 Weaknesses of students with SLI.....	62
<b>5.4 Teaching arrangements.....</b>	<b>68</b>
5.4.1 Revision and preparations .....	69
5.4.2 Differentiation during lessons and exams .....	72
5.4.3 Multisensory learning.....	77
5.4.4 Psychological factors .....	79
<b>6 DISCUSSION .....</b>	<b>80</b>
<b>BIBLIOGRAPHY .....</b>	<b>85</b>
<b>APPENDIX 1: Questions for English teachers .....</b>	<b>88</b>
<b>APPENDIX 2: Questions for special education teachers .....</b>	<b>89</b>
<b>APPENDIX 3: Analysis process. ....</b>	<b>91</b>
<b>APPENDIX 4: Excerpts in original Finnish.....</b>	<b>92</b>

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS, TABLES AND FIGURES

ADHD	Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder
ANCC	Amendments to the National Core Curriculum for basic education
CEFR	Common European Framework of Reference
DS	Down Syndrome
EFL	English as a foreign language
ICD-10	International classification of diseases, 10 <sup>th</sup> edition
IEP	Individual educational plan
MRI	Magnetic resonance imaging
NCC	The National Core Curriculum for and basic education
NL	Normal-language status
SLI	Specific language impairment
UN	United Nations
WS	Williams Syndrome

Tables:

Table 1. Criteria for SLI.....	9
Table 2. Subtypes of SLI. ....	11
Table 3. Three-tier support model. ....	31

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Specific language impairment (SLI) is an interesting learning disability because, in principal, it does not affect any other areas of learning besides language. However, we will notice that children with SLI may suffer from weaknesses in some functions, such as abstract thinking, mathematics, social relationships and memory. SLI is diagnosed when excluding conditions are met; these conditions are, among others, normal non-linguistic IQ, normal hearing, and no symptoms of autism spectrum disorder (Leonard 2014:15). SLI is as common as Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) and dyslexia, and significantly more common than autism (Leonard 2014), but still it is quite an unknown learning disability among teachers. SLI can be seen as difficulties with language expression or comprehension, or in the most severe cases with both (Schwartz 2009). Ervast and Leppänen (2010a:212) specify that SLI can be seen as difficulties with all areas of language, but the gravity of problems vary with each individual child.

In addition to the fact that SLI is a language learning impairment that affects Finnish students, this topic was chosen because there has been a division between those who favor inclusion, and those who consider separate special-needs education to be necessary. Finland, as many other European countries, has agreed to improve the inclusion of special needs students, which brings new challenges to teachers, and increases the number of special needs students' in mainstream education classrooms. In Finland a new way of organizing support in basic education was introduced in 2010: general support, intensified support and special support (Amendments to the National Core Curriculum 2010). The former division between mainstream education, part-time and full-time special-needs education was replaced with a three-tiered support model. Currently, each student is entitled for general support. If the general support is not enough, then a pedagogical assessment will be made and the student receives intensified support. Finally, if these resources are not enough, a more extensive pedagogical statement will be drawn, and the student is entitled for special support. (ANCC 2010.) The new National Core Curriculum (2014), which will come to effect gradually starting from fall 2016, highlights the inclusive practices, primary nature of differentiation and offering each student the support they need.

What is more, the increased knowledge about recognizing what types of characteristics Finnish students with SLI have, may help teaching professionals to recognize language impairments and to understand students with SLI better. In a yet more practical viewpoint, the knowledge about different practical teaching methods and arrangements that can be implemented with both mainstream education students and special needs education students, will benefit subject, classroom and special education teachers.

Some amount of research (see for instance Kumpulainen & Leinonen 2001) on primary school teachers' perceptions on teaching students with SLI has been done in Finland, but language teachers have not been in the interest before. Internationally, there is more research (see for instance Malinen et al 2013, Dockrell and Lindsay 2001 & Brackenreed 2010) on this topic but the researchers have not focused on English as a foreign language (EFL) teachers' perceptions. Furthermore, this study offers a slightly different viewpoint that takes into consideration the situation in Finland, and the concerns of Finnish teachers.

The data of this study was collected with semi-structured interviews that were conducted in the spring of 2015. The interview questions were loosely based on the key issues addressed in the interviews by Dockrell and Lindsay (2001). The participants of the present study were four English teachers who had taught a student with SLI and three special education teachers who had taught English to a student with SLI. All of the teachers were women, and they had five to more than twenty years of teaching experience. The data was analyzed using a data-based content analysis that entails a three-staged analysis process of coding, categorizing and synthesizing the data (Galletta 2012, Miles, Huberman and Saldaña 2014, and Hirsjärvi and Hurme 2008).

The three-tier support model was designed to lessen the placements to special education groups. Since this model is in use, English teachers teach students with specific language impairment (SLI) and other special needs in their groups. The research questions of the present thesis aim at understanding how teachers perceive teaching students with SLI. Firstly, the aim was to discover how English teachers perceive including students with SLI to mainstream education. Secondly, in the interest are the special education teachers' views about including the students with SLI to mainstream education or segregating them. Thirdly, the objective was to find out how English teachers felt they cope with students with SLI, and whether they felt that they had the skills and resources needed to teach students with SLI.

Lastly, the goal was also to uncover how teachers characterize students with SLI, and what measures the teachers take in order to support the students with SLI.

The hypothesis was that the results might show a need for more information about SLI in teacher training, and a need for more in-service training and resources. This hypothesis proved to be very accurate. Although teachers stated that there was a lack of training and information considering SLI, they were able to cope with students with SLI. Furthermore, they spoke about the students and their needs in a relatively positive manner, which emphasized the fact that teaching students with special needs is not unmanageable.

In this paper, I will first define and discuss specific language impairment and its characteristics, research traditions and origins. Then I will discuss the effects of SLI on language learning. In the third chapter I will present the Finnish National Core Curricula for basic education (2004, 2014) and the Amendments to the National Core Curriculum (2010) in order to explain, how basic education is organized in Finland. I will also discuss what are inclusion and inclusive practices in a school context. In the fourth chapter I review the methods, data, participants and method of analysis of this thesis. Fifth chapter consists of the subjects' perceptions on teaching students with SLI. Lastly the results are discussed in the sixth chapter.

## **2 SPECIFIC LANGUAGE IMPAIRMENT AND ITS RELATION TO LANGUAGE LEARNING**

In this section I will explain what kind of a learning disability SLI is. The first chapter contains the definition and characteristics of SLI. In addition, I will discuss three different methods of subtyping SLI. Furthermore, the reasons of SLI and its research traditions are explained. Second chapter looks into the effects of SLI onto memory and attention, Finnish language, different areas of language, and language learning. Moreover, language intervention methods are discussed in order to explicate how children with SLI can be aided. In this section I will offer a comprehensive view on SLI, and discuss the multidimensional nature of the language impairment.



## **2.1 Specific language impairment (SLI)**

Specific language impairment is a narrow learning disability, which manifests through deficits in language learning. Specific language impairment has been called, among others, congenital aphasia and developmental dysphasia in the past (Leonard, 2014). According to Tomblin (2009), SLI is a developmental language disorder, and it is referred to as ‘specific’ because it may be resulted from internal and possibly unique causes. Globally approximately 7% of all kindergarten-aged children have specific language impairment, and the impairment is 2-3 times more common for boys than it is for girls (Ervast and Leppänen 2010a:212). SLI is as common as Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) and dyslexia, and greatly more common than autism (Leonard, 2014). Ervast and Leppänen (2010a:212) further explain that specific language impairment manifests as problems with all areas of language, which are morphology, syntax, phonology, semantics and pragmatics, but the gravity of problems vary with each individual child.

### **2.1.1 Definition and criteria of SLI**

Ervast and Leppänen (2010a:212) explain that around 20% of children have a delayed speech development, which is characterized by late production of first words and difficulties in combining words into sentences, but only a minority of those will be diagnosed with SLI. They note that SLI will be suspected if a three-year old child, who has developed normally otherwise, cannot speak or his or her speech is very unclear or sparse. Schwartz (2009:3) emphasizes that SLI is diagnosed when a person does not suffer from other disabilities such as hearing impairment, general developmental delay, neurological impairment or autism. Therefore, children, and naturally adults, with specific language impairment perform normally in non-linguistic IQ tests. Furthermore, Schwartz clarifies that specific language impairment is “an impairment of language comprehension, language production, or both” (Schwartz 2009:3). This view of specific language impairment is adopted in the International Statistical Classification of Diseases and Related Health Problems (ICD-10). It is stated that language acquisition is disturbed without the presence of “neurological or speech mechanism abnormalities, sensory impairments, mental retardation, or environmental factors” (ICD-10). However, Leonard (2014:162) emphasizes that even though children with SLI do well in traditional nonverbal IQ tests, they still experience weaknesses in such nonverbal abilities as symbolic play, mental imagery and hypothesis testing.

Leonard (2014) presents similar criteria for SLI (see Table 1.) to those of Schwartz (2009) and Ervast and Leppänen (2010a). He states that nonverbal IQ is tested in order to prove that a language impairment is not caused by a deficit in general intelligence. SLI is a language impairment that is not caused by a hearing loss, and therefore a child must pass screening. Otitis media with effusion stands for condition in which fluid builds up in the middle ear, which may cause hearing loss and consequently language deficits if sustained. In order to diagnose a child with SLI, he or she should not have had recent evidence of otitis media with effusion. A child cannot have a brain injury or seizure disorder in order to be diagnosed with SLI. In addition, the oral structure must be normal, and a child cannot have a speech-motor deficit. Lastly, there must be an absence of autism spectrum symptoms, such as, impairment in making eye contact, lack of shared interest or enjoyment, repetitive manners and inflexible devotion to routines. (Leonard, 2014:15- 24.)

Table1. Criteria for SLI. (Leonard, 2014:15)

FACTOR	CRITERIA
Language ability	Score suggesting language impairment on a test with satisfactory diagnostic accuracy and supportive evidence from independent judgment/clinical placement
Nonverbal Intelligence	Nonverbal IQ of at least 85 or score that remains above 70 after standard error of measurement is taken into account
Hearing sensitivity	Pass screening at conventional levels
Otitis media with effusion	This factor is unlikely to be a cause of SLI by itself; however, for interpretation of language status, there should not be recent evidence of repeated episodes
Oral structure and function	No structural anomalies; pass screening using developmentally appropriate items and/or performance on oral-motor items clearly underestimates child' s observed expressive language
Interaction with people and objects	No symptoms of impaired reciprocal social interaction or restriction of activities

In other words, SLI is diagnosed when the excluding conditions are met. It is a way of distinguishing SLI from other language impairments that are present with syndromes such as Down syndrome (DS) and Williams syndrome (WS); although results show that the language features of SLI, DS and WS are more similar than different. However, the causes for all of these disorders are unclear. In addition, it is speculated that SLI might be one component of the autism spectrum, or that SLI is a milder version of autism. (Tomblin 2009.)

Ervast and Leppänen (2010a:212) state that it is common that children with SLI also have problems with learning and social skills. Leonard (2014:29) speculates that language deficit may lead to some social problems, such as withdrawal and low self-esteem, but may be that social problems are co-occurring weaknesses instead of products of language deficit. According to ICD-10, children with SLI often experience difficulties in reading and spelling, and they have emotional and behavioral problems.

According to Tomblin et al. (2003), the persistence of SLI is rather great in childhood. They studied 195 children in kindergarten, and followed up their process after two and four years (180 children). The relative language standing remained stable over the period of four years. Both in the 2-year and the 4-year follow-up approximately 60 per cent of the children showed persisting language impairment. When the kindergarten baseline results were compared with the 4-year follow-up, the change in language status was little. Tomblin et al. found that children with only expressive deficits improved more than those, who had both expressive and receptive deficits. Leonard (2014) adds that although linguistic abilities improve over time, adolescents and adults still have language weaknesses.

### **2.1.2 Subtypes of SLI**

The different subtypes of SLI are discussed in order to offer a comprehensive view on manifestations of SLI. SLI is a complex language deficit, and there is not a single hallmark that would always indicate that a child has specific language impairment. There is a general understanding of a division between 1) expressive-receptive, and 2) expressive subtypes. In other words, a child may struggle with expression and reception of language, or only with language expression. Leonard (2014:29-33) argues that many researchers have attempted to find subgroups for children with SLI, but they have not managed to produce reliable groups. I will discuss three different approaches shortly: ICD-10, Rapin and Allen's subgrouping and

Conti-Ramsden, Crutchley and Bolting's categorization. For the purposes of this thesis these classifications suffice.

ICD-10, which is devised by the World Health Organization, is a commonly referred document among the healthcare professionals, and was added for this reason. I chose to include Rapin and Allen's (1983) subgrouping, which is based on clinical studies, because it is the most referred way of subtyping SLI. It was impossible to obtain the original article by Rapin and Allen, and for this reason I will use Rapin's (1996) article, in which she discusses the subgroups. Conti-Ramsden, Crutchley and Bolting (1997) approached this issue slightly differently, and their way of grouping was included for this reason. Additionally, they discussed the similarities of their clusters with Rapin and Allen's subgrouping, which provides an interesting viewpoint. See Table 2. for a summary of the three different methods of subtyping.

Table 2. Subtypes of SLI.

	Rapin & Allen	Conti-Ramsden, Crutchley & Bolting	ICD-10
Mixed expressive and receptive	Verbal-auditory agnosia  Phonologic/syntactic deficit	–  Cluster 5	F80.2 receptive language disorder (Deficits in word-sound production are very common.)
Expressive	Verbal dyspraxia  Speech programming deficit disorder  –	Cluster 3 (no longer a speech disorder in 1999, but a motor speech disorder)  Cluster 4  Cluster 2	F80.1 expressive language disorder
Higher order processing disorder	Lexical deficit disorder  Semantic-pragmatic disorder	Cluster 1  Cluster 6	

SLI is listed in the ICD-10 under disorders of psychological development, more precisely in specific developmental disorders of speech and language. ICD-10 makes a division between F80.1 expressive and F80.2 receptive language disorder. Expressive language disorder is characterized by deficit in expressive spoken language, in other words, the level of expressive language is below age-appropriate level, but language comprehension is normal. A child may or may not have problems with articulation. Receptive language disorder consists of difficulties in understanding language and deficits in word-sound production are very common.

Rapin (1996) argues that specific language impairment can be divided into three subcategories: 1) mixed expressive and receptive, 2) expressive, and 3) higher order processing disorders. There are two types of each disorder, which equals a total of six subtypes. (Rapin & Allen 1983, cited in Rapin 1996:645-648.) Leonard (2014:30) speculates that only three categories could be used with children: verbal-auditory agnosia, phonologic/syntactic deficit and lexical disorder. Conti-Ramsden, Crutchley, and Botting (1997) used both psychometric tests and teacher judgment in their study. They studied 242 7-year-old children for a period of two years, and found six clusters. There was no match for Cluster 2, nor was there a match for verbal-auditory agnosia.

The two types of mixed expressive and receptive disorders are verbal-auditory agnosia and phonologic/syntactic deficit disorder (Rapin 1996:646-647). Verbal auditory agnosia stands for severe difficulties in phonological decoding. In the most severe cases it may result into auditory word deafness, muteness or being almost nonverbal. In a less severe variant the child's comprehension is impaired but a child may communicate in short, often grammatically incorrect utterances. Usually, the vocabulary is narrow and a child uses, for example, the word *animal* instead of a precise target word *a dog*. In contrast, phonologic/syntactic deficit disorder is the most common language impairment in children, and it is characterized by language that is "impoverished, with short, often ungrammatical utterances, impaired phonology, and a limited vocabulary." (Rapin, 1996:646). According to Conti-Ramsden, Crutchley and Botting (1997), Cluster 5, in which children have deficits in articulation, phonology, syntax and morphology, is the closest match to phonologic/syntactic deficit.

According to Rapin (1996:647), there are two types of expressive disorders: verbal dyspraxia and speech programming deficit disorder. Verbal dyspraxia is characterized by very short

words that are often distorted or lacking consonants. It is hypothesized that children with verbal dyspraxia are not able to translate the verbal images (word forms) into oral musculature commands. On the other hand, speech programming deficit disorder is characterized by long utterances which are grammatically and phonologically flawed. A child with this deficit has difficulties in telling coherent stories and explaining events. Conti-Ramsden, Crutchley and Botting (1997) found that Cluster 3 is the closest match for verbal dyspraxia. Cluster 4, in which the children experience similar deficits as the children in Cluster 3, but have higher language profiles, is the closest match to speech programming deficit disorder (Conti-Ramsden, Crutchley and Botting 1997).

In accordance with Rapin (1996), there are two types of higher order processing disorders: lexical deficit disorder and semantic-pragmatic disorder. On one hand, lexical deficit disorder consists of severe difficulties in finding words and false stuttering in attempt to come up with the wanted word. A child experiences significant difficulties in producing language on demand. On the other hand, semantic-pragmatic deficit is characterized by using language that is not appropriate in the context at hand. A child provides answers off the point even though he knows the correct answer; he might echo what the interlocutor says (echolalia) or speak to himself. Conti-Ramsden, Crutchley and Botting (1997) explain that Cluster 1, in which children performed poorly in all language tests, except in the simplest word naming and articulation tests, is the closest equivalent for lexical deficit disorder. Semantic-pragmatic disorder is the closest comparison with Cluster 6, in which children have semantic and/or pragmatic and receptive difficulties (Conti-Ramsden, Crutchley and Botting 1997).

In a follow-up study Conti-Ramsden and Botting (1999) found that children in Cluster 2 (phonology, expressive and word reading problems) no longer fulfilled the criteria for SLI. In addition, they noticed moving across the clusters. However, they conclude that the individual child's linguistic profile may have changed during time, usually has improved in some areas of language, but the children's profiles still fall into the clusters identified in the first study. In other words, SLI is a dynamic condition and the children's language profiles may change over time.

In this thesis, I will not attempt to categorize students into subtypes based on the interviewed teachers' experiences. However, the subjects were asked to describe SLI based on the students they have taught, and I also asked what are the strengths and weaknesses of the

students with SLI. The teachers' answers to these questions will reveal whether the subtype of a student is a mixed receptive-expressive, expressive or higher order processing disorder. Furthermore, the subtype of a student will be manifested in his or her ability to learn a foreign language, and what kind of support the student needs. The effects on language learning will be discussed in chapter 2.2. in detail. In the following chapter I will discuss what causes SLI. As one will observe the reasons have not been fully established yet, and there are many different findings that suggest that SLI is a very complex disorder caused by multiple factors.

### **2.1.3 Reasons of SLI**

Leonard (2014:148) explains that the reasons for SLI are very complex and multifactorial, but they may lie in the combination of genetic and environmental factors. It has been speculated whether the linguistic input the children with SLI receive in infancy is somehow inadequate because of the possible language impairment of the parent, or because interactants oversimplify their speech with children with SLI (Leonard 2014). Tropper and Schwartz (2009:194) emphasize that the findings concerning the roots of SLI are inconsistent for many reasons, among others, the methodological protocols and comparison groups may have varied. Most importantly different behavioral and neural phenotypes of SLI explain inconsistent results.

Schwartz (2009:3) suggests that SLI is genetically transmitted: if a sibling has it, it is four times more likely for the individual to have SLI. Tomblin (2009:427) and Leonard (2014) report that twin studies have supported the heritability claim of SLI. Two genes (ATP2C2 and CMIP) have been connected to non-word repetition, and K1AA0319 –gene is associated with reading and spoken language weaknesses (Leonard 2014:195). However, Leonard (2014) and Tomblin (2009) emphasize that there is not a single gene that would explain the occurrence of SLI; rather genetics are one of the many intertwining factors involved in the process.

According to Schwartz (2009) and Leonard (2009), there are two main competing theories of what causes SLI. First theory claims that SLI manifests due to such deficits in linguistic knowledge as lack of a rule or a principle, and the second one argues that the reason is limitations in domain-specific cognitive processes. According to Leonard (2014), deficits in linguistic knowledge denote that the person's representations of a language have not matured yet; for example, a child does not pass the optional infinitive stage as quickly and easily as

peers. Leonard argues that the fact that ideal input language treatment enhances children's language skills shows that the language learning system is inefficient or immature rather than broken.

Secondly, domain-specific cognitive processes are the processes that are necessary for the language processing: auditory perception, speech perception, phonological working memory and processing speed (Schwartz 2009). Leonard (2009:439-441) proposes that language problems derive from difficulty in processing and storing (language) information, which explain general language deficits. The difficulties in processing and storing information are caused by deficits in phonological working memory and working memory, and generalized slowing. Leonard hypothesizes that if a child has limitations in phonological working memory, he or she may need more exposures in order to learn a new word, which could lead into slower pace in learning new words. Additionally, deficits in the working memory capacity can hinder sentence comprehension: especially in case of a complex or ambiguous sentence. Lastly, the slower phonological processing makes it difficult to follow a conversation or a class. Both theories, 1) deficits in linguistic knowledge and 2) limitations in domain-specific cognitive processes, have been extensively researched, but neither of them can solely explain the complexity of SLI.

In addition to findings concerning deficits in phonological memory, working memory and speed of processing information, it has been established that the children with SLI have nonconforming brain volumes compared to normally developing peers. Gauger, Lombardino and Leonard (1997, see also Herbert et al. 2005) discovered by comparing Wernicke's area (planum temporale) and Broca's area (triangularis) of children with SLI with those areas of children with normal language skills via magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) that the children with SLI had considerably smaller Broca's areas, and they were more likely to have a rightward asymmetry of language structures. In other words, children with SLI have unusual brain volumes across different areas; children with SLI have larger brain volumes in language areas in the right hemisphere. Normally Wernicke's area and Broca's area are larger in the left hemisphere (Tomblin 2009:428). Gauger et al (1997) determined that the abnormal morphology in the aforementioned areas correlate with the language impairment. They suggest that the neurobiological deficits in the areas of brain that control language and language learning are the cause of language impairments.



Schwartz (2009:3) explains that children with SLI have aberrations in neurological structures and functions. These deviations result into problems with memory, attention, problem solving, mental rotation and mathematics. Trauner, Wulfeck, Tallal, and Hesselink (2000) explain that SLI is defined by the absence of other neurological diagnoses, but they found that 70% of subjects of their study had neurological abnormalities, such as fine motor impairment and hyperreflexia (over-responsive reflexes). Furthermore, 12 out of 35 children with SLI had abnormalities on their MRI scan. The more severe language deficits an individual had, the more significant neurological abnormalities were documented. The findings suggest that SLI is related to a more general nervous system dysfunction.

The origins of SLI are very complex and could be explained in greater detail, but due to the limitations and focus of this thesis, these further explanations will not be provided. The abnormalities in brain morphology; deficits in processing and storing language information; deficits in working memory, and environmental factors all contribute to difficulties in language learning.

#### **2.1.4 Researching SLI**

There is a general division between studying language production and language comprehension in SLI because, as seen in the chapter 2.1.2, there are different types of manifestations of SLI. Leonard (2014) emphasizes that it is very important to choose the reference point well: whether to compare chronologically same-aged normally developing peers, or mentally same-aged peers with children with SLI. According to Leonard (2014), children with SLI can experience two different kinds of deficits in language. The language development can be delayed: later emergence and slower learning rate. Alternatively, a child makes errors that a younger child would make with abnormal frequency, or deviant errors that typically developing children do not make.

According to Seigner-Gardner (2009:465), the language production research focuses on identifying the inadequate processes of language production that limit the expression of children with SLI. This field is divided into off-line and on-line research. Off-line research includes studies that look into language production on macro level and studies the linguistic system more globally. On-line research focuses on micro level issues of language usage, and it uses, for example, imagining techniques such as magnetic resonance imaging (MRI).

Off-line research is more popular in language production research, and it includes, among others, picture naming, verbal fluency tasks, non-word repetition, sentence completion, spontaneous language samples, story retelling and measuring the end-point of a process. There are many types of picture naming tasks, which all are used to assess semantic, phonological and articulatory abilities. Picture naming tasks are used in all speech and language evaluations. Verbal fluency tasks include lexical fluency (inventing as many words as possible starting with, e.g. *s-*) and semantic fluency (coming up with as many words as possible from a specific category, e.g. animals). Non-word repetition tasks measure short-term memory. Sentence completion tasks are used to investigate child's use of morphological markers. Spontaneous language samples give information about all language areas. Story retelling exercise tells about the child's ability to form a coherent, well-structured story. (Seiger-Gardner 2009:466-472.) All these methods are possible to use in a school context to assess the language production skills of a child suspected to have specific language impairment.

In Finland, a test called SLT-test (Tuovinen, Ahonen & Westerholm, 2007), which is an abbreviation for Sananlöytämistesti ("Word naming test"), is used, for example, in schools to assess the word naming accuracy and speed in different contexts, the benefits of priming and gestures. The test can be used with 4- to 10-year-old children, and there is a version that is suitable for younger (4-7) children and another version for older (8-10) children. There are different sections in the test, among others, naming nouns, verbs and different categories, and completing sentences. After the testing, the tester checks whether the child has understood the words he or she could not name. This test is relatively easy to use, and hence used in a school context as well.

According to Deevy (2009), language comprehension research is less used compared to the language production research because language comprehension can be assessed only indirectly: a response can be an action or an eye-movement. On-line and off-line studies are used in equal amounts, when it comes to studying language comprehension. Off-line methods include, among others, picture selection and act-out. Picture selection simply tests whether a child has understood a word and can choose a picture illustrating the meaning. Act-out task investigates whether a child can act-out with toys a sentence or a story he or she is told. On-line methods include, among others, lexical priming and monitoring eye-movements. Interest

in the field is moving towards using techniques such as MRI-imaging and other imaging and measurement equipment. (Deevy 2009.)

With these research methods it is possible to discover what type of a language impairment a child has, and which areas of language are most impaired. Especially language production tests are used in schools since the tests are rather easy to organize, and a special education teacher or a school psychologist can assess the results easily as well. After this initial analysis more tests can be made in order to specify the clinical picture of the child.

## **2.2 SLI and (foreign) language learning**

There are two theories on language and language acquisition of children with SLI: a deviance hypothesis and a delay hypothesis. On one hand, the deviance hypothesis speculates that children with SLI are different kind of learners, and their language features are different compared to normal-language status (NL) children. (Tomblin 2009:422-423.) On the other hand, the delay hypothesis proposes that slowed learning trajectory will ultimately lead into full maturity or possibly terminates before full maturity (Leonard 2014). Leonard (2014:94) suggests that there is a great amount of evidence for the delay hypothesis.

In this chapter I will first explain the possible effects of SLI on attention and memory, and how it will be seen in a classroom setting. Then I will move on to discuss the findings of Kunnari et al (2011) who explain how SLI can be seen in the Finnish language. This provides an interesting viewpoint to Finnish (English) teachers, who will see deficits both in Finnish and English in their occupation. It may help teachers to detect SLI and better understand, what types of errors children with SLI might make. Then, effects on different language areas are discussed. Lastly, I will briefly present Ervast and Leppänen's (2010b) and Leonard's (2014) conclusions on language interventions of children with SLI.

### **2.2.1 Attention and memory**

Children with SLI experience limitations in central cognitive functions, such as memory and attention (Schwartz 2009). According to Gillam, Montgomery and Gillam (2009), one affected area is the central executive, which regulates the storage of information into long-term memory, retrieves information from long-term memory and focuses attention. They

postulate that the central executive is also part of the development of self-regulation, planning, maintaining attention and inhibiting irrelevant stimuli. Children with SLI often experience attention problems. They may have a limited capacity to sustain their focus, or they may need more stimuli in order to activate the attention-focusing mechanism. Leonard (2014:172) explains that SLI and ADHD are two distinct deficits: although they co-occur occasionally. He points out that a deficit in attention combined with a slow pace of language acquisition and comprehension problems can lead into frustration and behavior resembling ADHD.

Gillam, Montgomery and Gillam (2009) explain that it is especially difficult for a person with SLI to learn a language by hearing it. When a person learns a language he or she should be able to listen to and remember sequences of words, associate them with meanings and store the units. Children with SLI do not benefit from communicative experiences as much as their peers because they cannot recognize the sounds correctly and store them in the short-term working memory. In other words, their phonological loop's ability to store and retrieve the units is weakened, which hinders learning. For this reason, it is very important to provide the instructions both in writing and orally in a classroom. Also, it is advisable to use short, precise utterances and ensure understanding.

### **2.2.2 SLI in Finnish language**

The main characteristics of students' possible struggles with Finnish are discussed in order to better understand the language profiles of Finnish children with SLI. According to Kunnari et al (2011), Finnish is an agglutinative language, in which verbs are inflected with six person-number suffixes. Finnish is a mixed language, in which first and second person singular and first and second person plural operate like null-subject language, but third person singular and plural operate like a non-null subject language. In other words, the personal pronouns preceding the first and second person singular and plural can be omitted (null-subject). Suffixes are used to express tense, mood and voice. There are four tense forms in Finnish: present simple, past simple, present perfect and past perfect.

Kunnari et al (2011) studied 51 children with SLI, and two comparison groups: one of 17 same-aged typically developing peers and other of 17 younger typically developing children. Three distinct difficulties were found: 1) difficulty to recognize the agglutinated tense +

agreement suffixes, 2) difficulty to distinguish the null-subject and non-null-subject contexts, and 3) difficulty to learn the specific features of the language since in colloquial language it is acceptable to use third person singular instead of the plural form, and passive forms can replace first person plural. Firstly, children may not notice that the suffixes are a combination of separate tense and agreement inflections (e.g. *istuin*, *-i*, *-n*), but they treat them as one inflection (e.g. *-in*). Secondly, the children struggle with the mixed nature of the verb paradigm. Lastly, the common colloquial use of passive forms instead of the first person plural forms in present tense and past tense confuse children with SLI. The problems with Finnish might reflect into problems with English. For example, if a child has severe difficulties in distinguishing different person and number suffixes in Finnish, it will be very difficult to compare verbs in the two languages.

### **2.2.3 Effects on different language areas**

SLI can affect language processing and production in many areas of language. In the following, I will discuss the effects on different areas of language, which are morphosyntax, semantics, syntax, reading and writing. All the examples are from native English language speakers, but can be extended to second or foreign language learners. These deficits can be detected in many normal language status children, but for children with SLI these divergences are more persistent, or do not improve at all.

Firstly, I will discuss the effects on morphosyntax. According to Oetting & Hadley (2009:342), problems with morphosyntax have to do with producing lexical morphemes (plural *-s*, progressive *-ing*) and functional morphemes (articles, possessives, third person singular *-s*, regular past *-ed*, auxiliary *do*). Children who have problems with morphosyntax may make errors of omission (e.g. *\*She singing* and *\*She play football*). In other words, they omit, for example, the finite verb morpheme or third person singular *-s*. The children might overregularize the regular past (e.g. *eated*) and plural (e.g. *mices*). This means that the children overextend learnt rules, which lead into ungrammatical forms. In accordance with Leonard (2009:434), the most common problem in English is the serious deficit in using morphemes to mark the tense and agreement, such as third-person singular *-s*, past tense *-ed* and copula and auxiliary *be*. In addition, children with SLI have a reduced accuracy in repeating sentences, and it is difficult for them to comprehend complex sentences (Leonard, 2014:19). Oetting and

Hadley (2009) explain that problems with morphosyntax are often assessed with standardized norm-referenced tests, which require an answer or a completion to a sentence. These tests might underidentify children with very selective impairment. Criterion-referenced tests give more information about the actual language skills of a child because the results are judged against a criterion not against other individuals. Also, language samples and parent assessment are used to assess morphosyntactic deficits. Often it is more important to focus on encouraging children to participate in daily interaction than strictly focusing on morphosyntactic intervention. However, children may benefit from modeling practice, simplifying the rules of a language and prioritizing, so that the more important rules are trained first. (Oetting and Hadley 2009.)

Semantics is another area in which children with SLI experience problems. McGregor (2009:365) states that semantic deficit stands for “difficulty understanding and conveying the meanings of words, sentences and extended discourse”. Children with semantic difficulties have problems with learning words, understanding connected speech, storylines and figurative language. Reasons for these problems lie with poor working memory and grammatical impairments. According to Leonard (2014:53,57), children with SLI are slow to learn first words, they have word finding difficulties, use long pauses, use non-specific words and have naming errors. Leonard (2014) states that grammatical impairment, which is the hallmark of SLI, can have further effects on semantics. It means that children with SLI cannot use syntactic cues, such as, word order and inflections to deduct the meaning of a particular word or a sentence. According to McGregor (2009), all individuals have an individual pace in developing their vocabulary and semantic skills. Hence, it is difficult to assess the size and depth of vocabulary. Parent reports, standardized tests and language samples are used to assess semantic knowledge. Semantic intervention can focus on increasing the breadth or depth of vocabulary, word formation or word combination. Any form of play, game or story reading that motivates the children will benefit them. It is advisable to concretize words and to give the learner enough time and opportunities for repetition. (McGregor 2009.)

Yet another affected area of language is syntax. According to Fletcher (2009), syntax is a more complex area of language, and for that reason there is not a coherent picture of this impairment yet. However, children may have difficulties with at least nonlocal dependency and combining sentences. Difficulties with nonlocal dependency appear in mistakes such as *\*the girl in the camp play soccer well*. A child does not recognize that the words *girl* and *play*

correlate with each other, and the form should therefore be *plays*. Difficulties with combining sentences appear with, for example, the use and understanding of coordinating and subordinating conjunctions, such as *and*, *or* and *when*. In this case a child does not understand the relation between two clauses. Syntactic impairment is assessed with standardized tests and language sampling. (Fletcher 2009.)

As mentioned earlier, children with SLI often have difficulties with reading and writing. According to Leonard (2014:171), there is an overlap between SLI and reading difficulties, but two groups can be found: 1) children who have problems with written word recognition but have good comprehension abilities (dyslexia), and 2) children who have deficits in written and spoken language comprehension. Hence, spoken and written language problems remain as separate, but connected deficits. According to Hook and Haynes (2009:424), two components interact in the process of reading and writing skill acquisition: 1) code-related word identification and spelling, and 2) content-related comprehension and written expression. Usually reading problems related to code-related word identification are diagnosed as dyslexia, but problems with reading comprehension are associated with SLI. In accordance with Hook and Haynes (2009), the general difficulties in reading and writing originate from problems with phonological awareness, orthographic processing, rapid serial naming, working memory, automaticity and fluency. The phonologic awareness includes sense of rhyming, awareness of syllables and sounds in a word. The orthographic processing stands for recognizing the graphemes that symbolize different phonemes, which is very important for fluent word recognition. Rapid serial naming involves naming, for example, colors or letters in response to visual stimulus. A very limited verbal working memory makes it difficult for a child to hold information and to understand a sentence. The automaticity of word identification and fluency of application of prosodic features and syntactic chunking are vital in reading. (Hook and Haynes 2009.)

Hook and Haynes (2009) explain that reading and writing impairments are assessed with screening (identifying at risk children), diagnostic assessment (individuals), progress monitoring (individual's response to intervention) and produced outcomes (overall achievement). A child can improve one's reading skills by increasing one's phonological awareness, practicing spelling, and developing automaticity, fluency and anticipatory set. The anticipatory set can be improved by providing a summary of a text, reviewing necessary vocabulary or providing comprehension questions. The child needs to be taught linguistic

rules explicitly in order to understand the rules that structure the language, and to be able to comprehend a text or express ideas in written language. (Hook and Haynes 2009.)

All in all, children with SLI can face numerous different difficulties in language learning. All these difficulties are due to deficits in the central cognitive domains, unusual brain morphology, and genetic and environmental factors. However, these impairments do not affect the children's non-linguistic IQ. The language learning of children with SLI can be enhanced with concretizing, repetition, reading stories, rhyming, simplifying and motivating.

#### **2.2.4 Language interventions for children with SLI**

Ervast and Leppänen (2010b) accentuate that early intervention and especially early support for families at risk, which are families in which parents or siblings have language deficits, are important. The language interventions and rehabilitation should begin already before school age. In Finland at the beginning of the intervention process the cognitive abilities, linguistic abilities, and communication and interaction skills of the child are evaluated carefully, and then based on the needs of the child the treatment is designed. Most often language treatment is speech therapy. In addition, occupational therapy and neuropsychological therapy can be used to improve the executive functions, self-esteem, motor skills, attentiveness and conceptualizing. Computer assisted forms of treatment have become more common. The parents, school and professionals should work closely, and they should compose a document containing the goals and procedures of language therapy. The therapy should be evidence-based, based on findings of research, but also customized for each individual's life and values.

According to Leonard (2014), it is possible that someday there is a procedure for prevention of SLI, but currently treatment is the only method of action. He states that children have responded quite well to language interventions although many show some language weaknesses as adults. He emphasizes that the affectivity of a language intervention must be studied carefully. There must be a comparison group, either no-treatment group or a group receiving treatment unrelated to the linguistic form in interest, and the groups must be assigned so that there is no significant statistical difference between them. Leonard specifies that language interventions can be imitation, modeling, focus stimulation, milieu teaching or conversation recasting based approaches. Imitation and modeling approaches are most drill-



like, and milieu teaching and conversation recast employ more free activities such as playing. Leonard postulates that language interventions do not only teach the child a specific form, but they enhance the child's language abilities in general although the treatment would focus on a specific feature, such as auxiliary *is*. He states that more focus should be placed on providing ideal language input, which consists of more frequent target forms, recasting and emphasizing the functional value, during treatment.

As diverse are the origins of SLI, so are the indications of it. It is impossible to give a short, general description of a typical child with SLI because the clinical picture is anything but one-dimensional. This being said it is clear that the children's language abilities vary greatly and so do their placements in a school system. In the mildest cases it is evident that a child is placed in a mainstream education group, but subsequently with more complex or severe cases it is not clear whether the best place is in mainstream or in special education.

### **3 CHILDREN WITH SLI IN THE FINNISH SCHOOL SYSTEM**

In the following, I will briefly discuss the ideology behind the terminology of disability and exceptionality. Then I will proceed to study the practices of organizing basic education in Finland. I will also present the learning objectives for English for grades 3-6 (ages 8 to 13) and 7-9 (ages 12 to 16) in order to illustrate what all students, without an individual learning plan, should learn in basic education. I will compare the practices and learning objectives of the National Core Curriculum with the interviewees' perceptions in chapter 5.

According to Baglieri and Shapiro (2011), our society rewards desired characteristics and suppresses the undesired ones. Culture makes these decisions seem natural, and culture again shapes our views. Media, entertainment, laws and language use tell about the beliefs about disability. Baglieri and Shapiro (2011:5) emphasize that "In schools, beliefs about disability are communicated through their organization and curriculum.". The use of terminology, such as exceptionality and disability, reveals what people should be like. If one is referred to as exceptional or special, the society highlights that the person does not fit the mold of a "normal" person. It is important to note that the idea of normal is always specific to culture, context and change over time. (ibid.) In other words, exceptionality and disability are culture specific and subjective agreements.

### **3.1 Finnish basic education - from segregation to integration?**

The National Core Curriculum is an important document in Finland: a municipality (or education providers) formulates a local curriculum based on the national core curriculum, and further on each school can formulate a curriculum based on the municipality's curriculum. Since there is a core curriculum in Finland, the basic education is coherent throughout the country – the same policies should be used in all of Finland.

In this section, I will discuss what the National Core Curriculum for basic education (NCC) (2004, 2014) states about the core values and principles behind organizing basic education. Currently teaching is organized based on the guidelines of the 2004 National Core Curriculum and the Amendments to the National Core Curriculum for Basic Education (ANCC) (2010). The Amendments were introduced due to an abnormally large increase in special education placements during 1999-2005. Many schools have already started to transition towards the policies of the new NCC (2014), which will come to an effect gradually to basic education in the fall of 2016. Although the new curriculum has been approved, it will take time before all of the policies are fully in effect. The National Core Curriculum for basic education (2014) will hopefully enhance the status of special-needs students, since inclusive practices are formulated more clearly.

#### **3.1.1 National Core Curriculum for basic education 2004**

The core values of basic education are human rights, equality, democracy, diversity of nature, maintaining the viability of our environment and accepting multiculturalism. It is also stated that basic education should promote communality, responsibility and respecting the rights and freedom of an individual. The mission of basic education is to provide an opportunity to growth, learning and developing a good self-esteem. The mission is to teach skills that are needed in life, in further studies and as citizens who develop the democratic society. (NCC 2004.) However, these values are not met if a part of students is segregated from the others: they will not learn how to be part of a community, they will not be equal nor will they have skills that they will need to actively participate into the society.

The requirements of a learning environment are characterized in the following way: “-- must support pupil's growth and learning. It must be psychically, psychologically, and socially safe, and must support the pupil's health.” (NCC 2004:16.) Additionally, the goal is to

enhance creativity, activeness, self-direction, motivation to learn, ability to set goals and participation into creating the learning environment (ibid.) These are the requirements that should be met in all schools and in all classrooms. It is a difficult assignment to decide which is the best possible learning environment for a specific student: whether a student should participate into mainstream or special need education. One has to remember that a mainstream education classroom with more than 20 students cannot offer a safe and educational learning environment for a student who has very severe difficulties in understanding speech or learning difficulties. However, it may be that in the past students were transferred to part- or full-time special-needs education too easily.

The curriculum specifies different ways of general support for all students. The cooperation between homes and school is emphasized: the school supports the parents' educational task, and it is the schools' responsibility to provide education and instruction. This cooperation will result into healthy growth, good learning and sense of security and wellbeing in school. In addition, all students are entitled for study guidance and student welfare. Yet another method of general support is remedial teaching, which will be given at any point if a student is experiencing learning difficulties. Remedial teaching will be provided as often and as much as needed in order to help the student attain a sufficient proficiency level. (NCC 2004.)

In the 2004 version of the National Core Curriculum for basic education special support was divided into part-time special-needs education and full-time special-needs education, which is for students who are enrolled or transferred into special-needs education. This system was abolished with the Amendments to the National Core Curriculum for basic education (ANCC) in 2010. Although this system is not currently in use, the old policies still have an effect on the teachers' perceptions of special-needs education. According to NCC (2004), the reason for giving special-needs education might have been a need for psychological or social support, or that the learning potential had been weakened by a disability or sickness. Student was given part-time special education if remedial teaching was not enough. Part-time special-needs education was directed to those students' who had "mild learning or adjustment difficulties" and who needed special attention in improving their prerequisites of learning. It could be given individually or in a small group, and it was important to combine part-time special-needs education well with the instruction in the mainstream education group. (NCC 2004.)

If it was decided that a student could not study in a mainstream education group at all, he or she was transferred to a full-time special-needs education. The main objective was that the student would conform the objectives of the syllabus, but if it proved unreasonable the syllabus would be individualized. The individualized syllabus could consist of the entire basic education syllabus or only of individual subjects. If a student was exempted from studying a subject, he or she studied something else instead so that the number of weekly lessons per year was the same. (NCC 2004.)

An individual educational plan (IEP) had to be devised for all students transferred or enrolled into full-time special-needs education. The document had to include, among others, students' learning abilities, strengths and needs; learning objectives; list of individualized subject syllabi and the objectives of those; assessment criteria; how education will be organized, and how the progress will be monitored. Education for the most disabled students was organized in activity areas, which were "motor skills, language and communication, social skills, skills in daily functions, and cognitive skills." (NCC 2004:29.)

For students in mainstream English education the learning objectives in grades 3-6 are divided under language proficiency, cultural skills and learning strategies. The students learn to talk about themselves and simple everyday actions, communicate in everyday situations, and learn about the target culture and compare it with the Finnish culture. Most importantly students should acquire learning strategies: they learn how to use different sources of information, work one-on-one and in small groups, and recognize their strengths and weaknesses. In grades 7-9 students' language proficiency naturally increases, and they will be able to talk about more abstract topics, they will learn more about the target culture and accepted ways of communicating. Students will learn to use various working methods and evaluate their own work. (NCC 2004:139-142.)

In sum, the strict division between special education and mainstream education should no longer exist. However, the learning objectives of the 2004 Core Curriculum are still in effect, and they are the goals for all students who do not have an individual educational plan (IEP). In addition, the three-tier support model, which is presented in the next chapter, guides the organization of basic education currently.

### 3.1.2 Amendments to the National Core Curriculum for basic education 2010

There was a need for improving the Finnish school system and especially special education in the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Malinen and Savolainen (2012) explain that during the period from 1995 to 2005 placements to special education nearly tripled in Finland. During this time the government paid 50 per cent more per student who was identified as having special needs than for a mainstream education student. This fact might explain the sudden growth of special education placements. Because of the significant increase of students in special education, the system needed to be reformed. The increased subsidies were abolished, and it was decided on the national level that every student should go to one's neighborhood school, special education decisions are temporary and the level of support is divided into general, intensified and special support. The Amendments to the National Core Curriculum for basic education (2010) were created.

The Amendments to the National Core Curriculum for basic education 2010 (ANCC) introduced differentiation and a new support model to the basic education in Finland. Differentiation is described in the following way:

“Differentiation of instruction is a primary means of taking the needs of the teaching group and the diversity of pupils into account, permeating through all instruction. Attention is given to learning styles and paces of work characteristic of different pupils, different abilities and interests, as well as emotional needs linked to self-esteem and motivation.” (ANCC 2010:5.)

There is no mention of differentiation in the 2004 National Core Curriculum for basic education. However, in the amendments of 2010 there are few paragraphs about the importance of differentiation in classroom. The importance and the primary nature of differentiation are emphasized. It is made clear that special-needs education is no longer the first choice; rather it is the last action. It is emphasized that differentiation of instruction will enhance the students' motivation since they will have appropriate challenges, and experiences of accomplishment. (ANCC 2010.)

Differentiation should be executed on three different levels: extent and depth of studies, and the progress rate. A teacher may select less demanding contents and tasks, and allow more time on a particular task. A teacher can also offer different choices for completing a task, for example oral or written form. It is possible to group students flexibly and use the spaces that

are available so that different groups can work in an undisturbed manner. In addition, students should have different means of demonstrating their abilities and knowledge. (ANCC 2010:6.) Currently it seems that these practices are endorsed and more attention is placed on supporting the students in mainstream education classroom. The participants of this study, presented various methods of differentiation in classroom, which are discussed in chapter 5.4.2.

There was a division between general and special support in the 2004 Curriculum. In the updated version of the Curriculum the support is divided into three tiers: *general, intensified and special* support. See Table 3. for the summary of the model. The emphasis is on recognizing the individual student's needs and strengths. The support can be continuous or temporary, minor or major, and it can consist of one or several forms. (ANCC 2010:7.) The three-tier model is based on early recognition of learning barriers, and it highlights not only the importance of identifying the difficulties or problems with the student but also in the school environment. The participants of the present study explained many support methods that were executed both on a school level and classroom level, which enabled the students with SLI to participate into mainstream education.

General support consists of differentiation, flexible grouping, cooperation between school and parents and student guidance and welfare. A student can receive remedial teaching or even part-time special-needs education if needed. Additionally, a student can have an assistant and learning aids in the classroom, or attend to an after school program. In general support all these methods are used in order to provide each student with a good, motivating and supporting learning atmosphere. (ANCC 2010.)

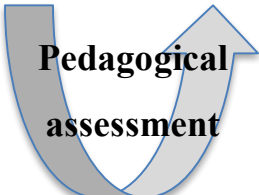
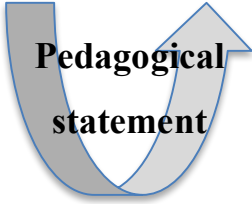
If the means of general support are not enough for an individual student, he or she will receive intensified support. Intensified support will be initiated after drawing up a pedagogical assessment. Teacher formulates the pedagogical assessment, which must include the student's learning status, the means of general support provided to the student, student's abilities and special needs, and assessment of the pedagogical, environmental or other means of support that will be provided. (ANCC 2010:11.) The support measures of intensified support are the same as in general support, but the measures are used more systematically and intensively, and the learning process is monitored more closely.

A learning plan must be formulated for a student in intensified support. It is a tool for the teacher and the student to monitor the student's development and to plan teaching. The learning plan should help the student to take responsibility of his or her learning. The plan includes, among others, learning abilities and needs, goals, teaching and grouping arrangements, special methods, strategies and aids, monitoring the progress, assessment methods and a list of the people, who will be providing the support. (ANCC 2010.)

Lastly, a student can receive special support if other means of support prove to be inadequate, or if it is decided that a student will have an extended compulsory education. All forms of support, including full-time special-needs education, can be used. A formal decision on special support must be made, and it is made on the basis of a pedagogical statement. Before a pedagogical statement can be made, a teacher (or other employee or official) must be informed about the learning progress, received support measures, and the student welfare group must combine a statement of the student's overall situation. After receiving this information, a pedagogical statement will be drawn. It must include the same aspects as the pedagogical assessment and, in addition, an assessment of whether a student should have an individualized syllabus in one or more subjects. (ANCC 2010.)

All students who receive special support will have an individual educational plan (IEP). The document includes, among others, learning abilities and special needs, subjects, goals, assessment methods, pedagogical solutions, other support solutions, description of cooperation and responsibilities of different parties involved, and cooperation between home and school. If a student has an individualized syllabus in some subjects, the IEP must also include a list of the subjects, their contents and objectives, and assessment methods. It is stated in the law that the need for special support must be revised on regular basis. In case it is determined that a student does not require special support any longer, he or she will receive intensified support. (ibid.)

Table 3. Three-tier support model. (Ideas adapted from Amendments to the National Core Curriculum for basic education 2010)

General support 	Intensified support 	Special support
(Learning plan)	Learning plan	Individual educational plan
Ways of support	Ways of support	Ways of support
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Differentiation</li> <li>* Flexible grouping</li> <li>* Cooperation between school and parents</li> <li>* Student guidance</li> <li>* Student welfare</li> <li>* Part-time special-needs education</li> <li>* (learning plan)</li> <li>* remedial teaching</li> <li>* assistant, aids</li> <li>* after school programs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Differentiation</li> <li>* Flexible grouping</li> <li>* Cooperation between school and parents</li> <li>* Student guidance</li> <li>* Student welfare</li> <li>* Part-time special-needs education</li> <li>* learning plan</li> <li>* remedial teaching</li> <li>* assistant, aids</li> <li>* after school programs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Differentiation</li> <li>* Flexible grouping</li> <li>* Cooperation between school and parents</li> <li>* Student guidance</li> <li>* Student welfare</li> <li>* Part-time special-needs education</li> <li>* remedial teaching</li> <li>* assistant, aids</li> <li>* after school programs</li> <li>* Full-time special-needs education</li> <li>* Individual educational plan</li> </ul>

### 3.1.3 National Core Curriculum for basic education 2014

Finnish National Board of Education signed and approved the new Core Curriculum for basic education on 22<sup>nd</sup> of December 2014. The new curriculum will come to an effect on 1<sup>st</sup> of August 2016 for the grades one through six, and gradually for grades seven through nine in 1<sup>st</sup> of August 2017, 2018 and 2019. Many schools have already gradually started to introduce the new principles. Participation and parity are highlighted in the curriculum. The three-tier support model, which was introduced in the amendments of 2010, is integrated into the Curriculum. The content of the three-tier model is the same as in the amendments but it is explained in more detail. I will not present the three-tier support model (see Table 3. Three-tier support model) again in this section.



A strong emphasis is placed on the human rights and equality in the new curriculum. The curriculum, unlike the previous version, refers among others to the United Nations (UN) Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), Convention on the Rights of the Child (1991) and Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2007). It is clearly stated that “Basic education is based on respecting life and human rights. Its mission is to defend them and the integrity of human dignity.” (NCC 2014.) The basic values are very similar to those of the 2004 Curriculum: uniqueness of a student and right for good education; humanity, education, equality and democracy; multiculturalism and sustainable lifestyle. (NCC 2014:12-14.)

The learning theory behind the NCC states that the emphasis is on a student being an active, self-directed learner, who sets goals for oneself and reflects his or her learning and emotions. A student works together with other students and teachers, which develops the ability to understand other persons’ views. Life-long learning and learning how to learn are very important aspects. Students’ self-image and notion of self-efficacy affect their goal setting, which is why teachers must provide students with versatile positive and realistic feedback and guidance in order to encourage the students. (NCC 2014:14-15.)

For the first time students with language deficits are discussed in the core curriculum. It is stated that students with specific language impairment can have an interpreter, or use augmentative or alternative communication methods, such as symbols. In addition, a teacher can use signs and symbols to aid communication. If there is an assistant in the class, his or her role is to guide and assist the students according to the teacher’s instructions. However, all the people working with a student will plan and organize the support together. If a student needs aids, their use must be systematic. The assistant’s support will help the student take responsibility for one’s learning and to develop a good self-esteem. (NCC 2014:76.)

The school subjects will not be seen as separated as they are currently. The objective of basic education will be “a wide-ranging competence”. The seven core competences are: learning to learn, cultural knowledge, taking care of oneself, multimodal literacy, information and communication technologies, working life skills and active participation. The aim of the seven core competences is to support personal growth and active participation. The emphasis is on encouraging students to recognize their own strengths, potential and special

characteristics. These skills are taught in all subjects through the subject core contents. (NCC 2014.)

The seven core competences can be detected in the learning objectives of English. At the end of grade six (age 12 or 13) students should be at the proficiency level A2.1 (Common European Framework of Reference, CEFR) in functioning in interaction, understanding texts and producing them (NCC 2014). The curriculum emphasizes the multicultural nature of English speaking world, and encourages comparing and contrasting one's own culture with different cultures. Learning strategies are very important for young learners of English because they might not have previous experience on studying a language. The topics are those very close to the students' immediate living circles; they learn to talk about themselves and their family, and to communicate in everyday situations. Importantly the new curriculum highlights the use of authentic material from Internet. These goals will be met by using versatile teaching and learning methods, such as, drama and games. It is suggested that European language portfolio or another similar tool is used to evaluate the students' language skills. (NCC 2014:244-246.)

At the end of ninth grade (age 15 or 16) students should be at the proficiency level B1.1 (CEFR) in functioning in interaction, understanding texts and producing them. In grades 7-9 the knowledge and skills acquired in grades 3-6 will be deepened, their linguistic power of deduction and learning strategies are developed further. The topics cover more abstract matters. English is seen as a lingua franca and its global nature is emphasized. The goal is that the students' language use is natural and appropriate in a context. Students should be active and independent. (NCC 2014:399-400.)

The new Core Curriculum will change the Finnish school system quite considerably. We are accustomed to having separate subjects and teachers who work rather independently and solitarily. In the future teachers will cooperate more in order to offer the students a wide-ranging competence. Possibly there will be more simultaneous, collaborative teaching with a special education teacher when all students study in one group, and there is a need for more differentiated instruction. Finnish teachers must adopt a drastically new view on teaching and their profession.

## **3.2 Inclusive teaching**

The roots of inclusive teaching can be found in the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), Convention on the Rights of the Child (1991) and Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2007). Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) ensures the equality and freedom of all individuals. Convention on the Rights of the child (1991) prohibits all discrimination, and it ensures good care, right to be heard when making decision concerning the child and having access to good quality education. The main principles of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2007) are dignity, non-discrimination, participation and inclusion into society, acceptance, equality and accessibility. It is formulated that all children with disabilities are entitled to inclusive mainstream education. The education must develop the children's potential to the fullest and the children must receive necessary support to maximize the academic and social development.

In the following subchapters, I will explain what is inclusion, and what is needed from society in order to establish inclusive ideology. Then, I will discuss, how to organize inclusive teaching in an educational system and classroom level. Lastly, I will present the results of three previous studies concerning the self-efficacy beliefs of teachers of children with learning disabilities or SLI.

### **3.2.1 What is inclusion?**

Ainscow, Booth and Dyson (2006:15) define inclusion as concern with students with special education needs, response to exclusion, concern for all groups seen vulnerable for exclusion, developing school for all, education for all and approach to education and society. Often it is forgotten that inclusion stands for including everyone at risk of exclusion, not only students with special needs. Additionally, it is central to develop the education system and society by increasing participation and removing restrictive and unequal practices. Ainscow et al (2006) explain that often there is an inclusive discourse in schools, but in reality the practices are not inclusive. They emphasize that inclusive practices must be extended from speech to actions. Developing inclusive values, encouraging student participation, involving the parents and

community, including categorized students, deploying support staff and school-to-school collaboration are a few methods to do so.

The Finnish National Core Curriculum (2014) has adapted a very similar view on inclusion as Ainscow, Booth and Dyson (2006). It is stated that the school administration is responsible for organizing necessary support, and removing all obstacles for growth and learning in the school culture. Emphasis is placed on each teacher's responsibility of students' learning and wellbeing, and it is the teacher's task to monitor and improve them. Teacher must recognize learning difficulties and ensure that student receives necessary methods of support. The cooperation between staff and parents is crucial. (NCC 2014.)

Shift towards inclusive education starts from changing attitudes and views about special needs and disabilities. According to Baglieri and Shapiro (2011), positive beliefs will be reflected into positive feelings, and in contrary negative beliefs lead into negative feelings. The feelings will be represented in actions. Previous experiences and information about disability shape people's attitudes toward disability. According to Baglieri and Shapiro (2011:7), it is important to note that attitudes are acquired through "observational learning", which stands for observing and adopting the views of the surroundings. This matter is also addressed in the NCC (2014); school culture is shaped by the conscious and unconscious factors, such as, values, beliefs, attitudes, written and unwritten rules that are present in the school. It is recognized that adults' beliefs and values are passed down to the students, and it is important to recognize the school culture and improve it constantly. Baglieri and Shapiro (2011) add that children may learn in schools that students with disabilities are different. This view leads into segregation, which feeds negative attitudes. The prejudices must be addressed because simply integrating students with disabilities into mainstream education is not enough unless the students' negative attitudes are addressed. (Baglieri and Shapiro 2011.) Nevertheless, one can observe in Finnish schools that not everyone is included and separate special education groups and also schools exist which underlines the speciality of some of the students.

### 3.2.2 How to organize inclusive teaching

Forlin (2012:177) has introduced the Inclusive wheel that contains all the elements that construct an inclusive education system. In the core there are the government and education system, which are the driving forces. In the inner circle there are factors such as awareness, leaders, institutions, schools, teacher education and school based curriculum, which must be addressed and prepared for inclusion. In the rim there are, among others, principals, teachers, educators, pre-service and in-service training and students, who are responsible for executing the inclusive ideology. What is highlighted in the model, is that the inclusive policies must be addressed in a national level, and the transformation begins with developing the school system, laws and policies first. Then the policies must be transferred into actions – first teachers must be educated accordingly and an inclusive curriculum must be drawn. Lastly, the teachers have to implement the practices in schools. In Finland, the inclusive policies are formulated in the state level and included in the newest curriculum, but perhaps the policies have not been realized yet as completely as they might be in the future.

Malinen and Savolainen (2012) argue that in Finland the fact that the teacher training of subject teachers, classroom teachers and special education teachers are separated is a hindrance. It would be important to increase the cooperation between all teacher trainees. The trainees should have more opportunities for co-teaching, planning and consultation with others. Malinen and Savolainen state that it would be better to train in “normal” schools, rather than in universities’ training schools as the practice is currently. Malinen and Savolainen emphasize that there is still a need for special education teachers in the future, since special educational needs do not disappear even though schools become more inclusive. In an inclusive education system, the expertise of special education teachers will be crucial, and the cooperation between mainstream and special education teachers must be increased already now in order to answer to the needs of future.

In a classroom level a single teacher can take many actions in order to enhance the inclusion of a student with language impairment. Baglieri and Shapiro (2011:165-176) present different ways to consider the needs of students whose communication or interaction need specific attention. In addition, Dufva, Vaarala and Pitkänen (2007:156-192) offer many guidelines for (Finnish) foreign language teachers of children with SLI.

Baglieri and Shapiro (2011) emphasize that the students must be taught acceptance and empathy, which help the students to form a community in the classroom. They emphasize encouraging and teaching many means of communication in such a way that the students feel comfortable in communicating with each other. In addition, cooperative learning in small groups will teach the students how to work together, which is also highlighted in the NCC (2014). However, Baglieri and Shapiro (2011) suggest that it might be sensible to assign tasks and roles beforehand to ensure everyone's participation. In addition, the National Core Curriculum for basic education (2014) emphasizes the importance of versatile working methods, and encourages to use experimental and functional approaches alongside with exercises that employ different senses, movement and drama which will increase students' engagement and self-direction. Different approaches and multisensory learning make learning enjoyable for all, but especially students with SLI benefit from the increased usage of other formats besides spoken language, and it may increase their motivation significantly.

Baglieri and Shapiro (2011) emphasize that a teacher can model and teach respectful ways of communication by reviewing the practices of turn taking and pausing. Turn taking and pausing are particularly important for a speech impaired child because they will allow the child to participate and to distinguish the end of one topic. It is important not to correct or rush a non-fluent speaker, or supplement him or her with the end of an utterance unless he or she has particularly asked for it. Dufva, Vaarala and Pitkänen (2007) recommend that a teacher allows enough time, and revises the questions and language stimuli enough. Dufva, Vaarala and Pitkänen suggest providing clear target language input and offering a simple language version of a text if necessary.

The learning environment has an important role in making students feel comfortable and safe. Baglieri and Shapiro (2011) state that the teacher has to reduce unnecessary sounds in the classroom, consider seating arrangements and allow working in a smaller group in order to remove environmental barriers. They note that students should be allowed to learn the expectations of the class, which may be, for example, procedures of asking questions or help, behavioral rules and classroom routines. Only after learning these expectations and procedures, students can focus on learning the subject matter.

Baglieri and Shapiro (2011:171-172) explain that most importantly the teacher must provide instructions in writing and orally, check for understanding and break down a difficult task. Dufva, Vaarala and Pitkänen (2007) state that if a student struggles with language comprehension, it might be best to focus on headings and pictures first in order to prime the student for the text. Dufva, Vaarala and Pitkänen suggest that a student who struggles with language expression might benefit from exercises concentrating on pronunciation and phonetics. They also recommend having more structured multiple choice exercises because it is often difficult for a student with SLI to recall words and discuss abstract matters. Baglieri and Shapiro (2011) advise informing the students on how long they have for each task and clearly separating one task from other.

In addition, Dufva, Vaarala and Pitkänen (2007) suggest that it is important to teach language-learning strategies. The strategies are especially important for students with SLI since they often have a narrow vocabulary and need different strategies to deduce the meaning of a sentence. For Finnish students with SLI the main difficulty in English is the different orthography and phonology of a word, because in Finnish the orthography is very similar with the pronunciation. Teacher should focus the students' attention onto new words, and how they are pronounced and written. In addition, students should be able to take an exam orally or in writing depending on the students' strengths. Dufva, Vaarala and Pitkänen emphasize that the means are not extraordinary or special, but they must be used more systematically with students with SLI.

The methods of organizing an inclusive education, which fits all students not only the students with SLI, are not unmanageable to execute in a classroom, as we can notice from the results of the present study. Most of the methods enhance the structure of the lesson, hence everyone knows what will happen and in which order. Consequently, reviewing the most important facts and keeping pauses at the end of a topic help all students to re-orientate to a new topic. Priming and revision aid all students to understand new language items better. In sum, teachers do not need special methods with a group in which there is a student with SLI. However, the student with SLI might need more attention, support and expertise, which may lead into decreased self-efficacy beliefs and difficulties in classroom management.

### **3.2.3 Teachers' perception of coping in an inclusive classroom**

First, I will define the term self-efficacy. The concept of self-efficacy is important in this thesis because the aim is to find how the teachers perceive that they are coping with the students with SLI. Then I will discuss the results of three studies that investigated the self-efficacy beliefs of teachers who teach students with SLI or other learning disability. The first research studied, among others, the self-efficacy beliefs of Finnish teachers. The second study was conducted in England and the third in Canada. However, we can see that the results are quite similar in all of the studies.

According to Bandura (1997), self-efficacy stands for one's belief in one's capability to organize and execute actions to attain something. These beliefs have an effect on one's choices; which courses of actions to pursuit, how much effort one puts forth, how resilient one is and whether one's thoughts are self-hindering or self-aiding. The beliefs of efficacy are key to agency; if one believes that he or she has the power to achieve something, one will strive towards the goal. If a person doubts his or her capability, he or she shies away from challenges, has a weak commitment and recovers slowly from setbacks. Teachers' perceived self-efficacy consists of knowledge of subject matter, classroom management, enlisting resources and parents' involvement and motivating the students to learn. (Bandura 1997.)

Malinen et al (2013) studied the self-efficacy beliefs of teachers in Finland, China and South Africa. They studied the perceived capability to employ inclusive practices, such as "modifying the instruction and assessment according to students' needs, preventing and controlling disruptive student behaviour, and collaborating with parents and involving them in the school activities of their children" (Malinen et al 2013:34). In Finland they sent out a Teacher Self-Efficacy for Inclusive Practices questionnaire for basic education teachers and principals (grades 1 through 9) in Eastern Finland and in a South-Western city, and received 855 completed questionnaires. They found that the majority of the Finnish teachers (68.3%) had none to medium experience in teaching students with disabilities. Furthermore, majority of the teachers (67.4%) had received none or little inclusive education training. However, 80 per cent of the teachers had considerable interaction with people with disabilities. The Finnish teachers' self-efficacy was most affected by the lack of training and experience in teaching students with disabilities. In addition, mainstream teachers' beliefs of self-efficacy might have been lowered because they believe that only special education teachers are



competent to work with students with special needs. (Malinen et al 2013.) This is most likely due to the fact that mainstream education teachers have little or no training with students with special needs, and special education and mainstream education teacher training are completely separated from each other in Finland.

Dockrell and Lindsay (2001) reviewed the perceptions of mainstream and special needs teachers in England. They first identified children with speech impairment in two Local Education Authorities areas, and contacted their parents for permission to participate in the study. Then the teachers of the 69 children with speech impairment were contacted. The teachers were interviewed using a semi-structured interview, and they completed three standardized scales, in which they evaluated the students. Dockrell and Lindsay found that the understanding of the nature of SLI was limited; the teachers had received very little training, and they would have needed help in implementing the intervention procedures proposed by speech and language therapists. The teachers were aware of their limitations, and did not only blame resources and staffing for the problems. In general, the teachers were worried about not being able to provide the support the child needed.

Brackenreed (2008) studied the perceived stressors of Canadian teachers'. 269 mainstream education teachers from elementary and secondary schools of northeastern Ontario formed the population of the study. They responded to a questionnaire sent through mail. Brackenreed found that the teachers believed that most students with disabilities benefit from mainstream education, but the teachers felt that the demands of the students are "staggering" and cause a great deal of stress. The students with physical or speech and language difficulties were found the least stressful. The teachers perceived their training and self-competency to be insufficient, which lead to stress in dealing with students' with special needs and others. Furthermore, the teachers felt that they had difficulties with managing students' behavior and inadequate support in the classroom.

The results suggest that there is a lack of knowledge about SLI and other learning disabilities, and a lack of training in teaching students with special needs. This lack of education is visible in Finland and in foreign countries. The teachers of the three studies were worried whether

they could offer the students the support they need. What is more, the teachers felt that they had difficulties in classroom management.

### **3.3 Research questions**

This research aims to discover how teachers' feel about teaching students with SLI, and what kind of teaching methods they use when teaching them. There is very little research about this topic in Finland, perhaps because SLI is not as well-known language difficulty as dyslexia, for example. However, SLI regards approximately 7% of kindergarten aged children (Ervast and Leppänen 2010a:212), and for that reason is an interesting and practical research subject, especially because we know that language difficulties are quite persistent (Tomblin et al. 2003, Leonard 2014).

In this thesis I will provide answers to the following research questions:

1. How do Finnish English teachers perceive including students with SLI to mainstream English education?
2. How do special education teachers perceive including students with SLI to mainstream English education? How do special education teachers perceive teaching English to students with SLI in special education groups?
3. What is the teachers' perception of coping with the students with SLI?
4. How do the teacher characterize students with SLI? And what measures or arrangements do they take in order to support the students with SLI?

The focus is on the teachers' own perceptions of teaching students with SLI and coping with them. The study will show how teachers perceive inclusion and separate special-needs education, and how well equipped they feel they are to teach students with SLI. This has implications to the teacher training in Finland. Furthermore, teachers explain what characteristics of students with SLI they have perceived, which might help other Finnish teachers to identify specific language impairment in their students. In addition, these characterizations will offer a viewpoint to how teachers perceive students with SLI. Lastly, teachers reveal what teaching and exam arrangements they have found useful, which can help teachers to modify their teaching to suit students with different special needs. Overall, the

findings of the present study will help teachers to understand Finnish students with SLI and how to teach them better.

## **4. THE PRESENT STUDY**

In this section I will discuss the methodology and methods of this thesis. First, I will briefly present different data collections methods, and then explain why a semi-structured interview was chosen as the data collection method of the present thesis. Secondly, the participants of the present study, and the data collection process are presented. Lastly, I will review the data-based content analysis method that was chosen as the data analysis method of the present study.

### **4.1 Methods**

The present study is a qualitative study, since the aim of this thesis is to discover teachers' perceptions and experiences. The objective is to learn how teachers feel about including students with SLI, and how they feel they are coping. In addition, I am interested in discovering what measures or arrangements the teachers take in order to support the students. Due to the aims and interests of the thesis, the data was collected with a semi-structured interview, and I did not observe any lessons because the purpose of the study is only to map the teachers' beliefs and concerns.

#### **4.1.1 Data collection methods**

Commonly used data collection methods include, among others, questionnaire, observation and interview. Hirsjärvi (2009a) explains that the research frame can range from unstructured observation and discussions to structured interviews and questionnaires. It is vital to choose the appropriate data collection method in order to answer to the research questions. In the following, I will briefly present different types of data collection methods, and explain why they were not chosen as the method in this research.

According to Hirsjärvi (2009a), a questionnaire is a suitable data collection method when it is necessary to collect a large number of answers and data that can be converted into statistical form. However, one cannot be sure how invested the respondents are, or whether all the

respondents understand the questions in the same manner. It is also time-consuming to devise a questionnaire, and it might be difficult to receive enough responses. A questionnaire can be distributed via mail, email, online or in person, and it can consist of open or multiple-choice questions or scales. Hirsjärvi and Hurme (2008) emphasize that a hastily compiled, untested questionnaire is a very unreliable and invalid tool. For the purposes of the present study the data could not have been collected with a questionnaire because it would not have been possible for the teachers or the researcher to extend on certain topics and ask for clarification. Also, the answers would have had to be quite extensive, and it would have been unlikely to acquire enough data via a questionnaire.

Hirsjärvi (2009a) postulates that observation can be used when a researcher wants to discover whether a subject acts as he or she claims. In other words, it is possible to discover if person's ideologies are transferred into actions. Furthermore, Hirsjärvi and Hurme (2008) explain that observation can be used to identify language use and behavior. Hirsjärvi (2009a) suggests that observation is time-consuming and the most suitable for a qualitative study. The presence of the researcher might change the dynamics of the observed group and distort the results. The observation process can be very systematic and the researcher needs to note the events very precisely. Alternatively, the researcher can participate into the interaction, but there are many ethical problems related to participatory observation. The aim of this thesis is to uncover teachers' perceptions and opinions, and they would have been very difficult to observe in a classroom, and for this reason observation was not chosen as the data collection method. Moreover, observation can only look into the present, not in the past or in the future (Hirsjärvi and Hurme 2008).

Hirsjärvi (2009a) states that interviews are very commonly used methods in qualitative studies. An interview can be conducted individually, in pairs or in groups. It can also be structured, thematic (semi-structured) or open. Hirsjärvi and Hurme (2008) state that a structured interview is the most suitable interview method when the data must be easily quantified, and the goal is to collect factual information that can be provided very briefly. On the other hand, an unstructured interview might resemble a discussion, and the researcher formulates questions according to the interviewee's answers. According to Hirsjärvi and Hurme (2008:35), the advantages of an interview are the active role of the interviewee, possibility to ask for clarification, and the interviewee may extend on a topic more than the interviewer has anticipated. However, there are disadvantages in interviews: the interviewee

might answer in a socially acceptable manner in order to avoid embarrassment, and both the interview process and transcribing are time-consuming (Hirsjärvi 2009a).

I chose an individual semi-structured interview because it might be difficult to discuss apprehensions and perceptions openly in a group. An unstructured interview did not suit the purpose of the present study because there were certain themes that had to be discussed in order to answer the research questions satisfactorily. A structured interview would have restricted the data collection process significantly. In the following, I will present the semi-structured or thematic interview, which was chosen as the data collection method of this thesis.

#### **4.1.2 Semi-structured interview**

Both terms semi-structured interview and thematic interview are used to describe an interview type that is in between the unstructured and structured interview. A semi-structured interview is characterized by the fact that the interview focuses on certain, pre-determined themes but the order nor the form of the questions are not fixed (Hirsjärvi and Hurme 2008:41). Hirsjärvi and Hurme emphasize that the interviewees' perceptions are central and the meaning is formed in a dialogue. The setting in a semi-structured interview is less formal than in a structured interview, which allows the interviewees to control the experience more. There are mainly two types of questions: ones related to opinions and others to facts.

According to Galletta (2012), a semi-structured interview consists of open-ended and more theory driven questions. This way it is possible to gain insights into interviewees' perceptions and ground the interview to the research field in question. Galletta emphasizes that each question should be closely related to the purpose and aim of the study. Moreover, Galletta explains that there are three (or more) stages in the interview protocol: an opening segment, a middle segment and a concluding segment. In the opening segment official matters such as consent and permission to record the interview are taken. It is important to create a relaxed and comfortable environment. The questions are very open-ended in the first segments, and the interviewee can explain his or her experiences or perceptions concerning the topic of the study. Also Hirsjärvi and Hurme (2008:107) suggest that the opening questions should be broad and easy to answer, in order to engage the interviewee. According to Galletta (2012), the researcher can ask more specific, in-depth questions in the middle segment, which allows

the interviewee to elaborate on a specific topic. Lastly, in the concluding segment the researcher can return to the narrative the interviewee has shared, make conclusions, ask for final thoughts and thank for the interview.

The set of questions of this study was formulated loosely based on the key issues addressed in the interviews by Dockrell and Lindsay (2001) (see section 3.2.3). Dockrell and Lindsay (2001:374) focused on finding how teachers understand SLI, what type of training they have received, and how much experience they have of children with SLI. Furthermore, they asked what are the strengths and needs of the child they were currently teaching, how the needs were met, and the support the teachers had received from other professionals. Also, the order of the themes (See Appendix 1 and 2) was decided based on Galletta's (2012) suggestions; the first questions are simple background questions that lead into the topic, in the middle section there are more in depth questions, and in the concluding segment there is a question that allows the interviewees to add anything they wish. The interview questions were piloted with an English teacher, and her interview was included in the data because the questions did not change considerably after her interview. In the beginning of each interview I explained that the present study focuses on the personal views of each teacher, and that they are free to extend on any topic they feel is relevant. Although the interview questions are arranged in a numerical order, the order of the questions was not the same in each interview. In some interviews the interviewee began to discuss a theme that was scheduled for later, and I asked them to elaborate on that topic, and then returned to the original topic at hand.

## **4.2 Participants and data**

Galletta (2012) suggests that there is a saturation point which is a point when no new thematic matters are articulated in the interviews, and the researcher comprehends that she has received enough data. However, often other practicalities such as time, nature of the research and costs limit the number of participants. Nevertheless, it is important to create a representative pool of participants. SLI is such a perplex language impairment that it is very difficult to reach a saturation point because teachers have different types of experiences. However, the interviewed teachers' experiences are somewhat comparable and they had similar concerns.

The participants of the study were found by sending interview requests via e-mail to teachers and principals, who were asked to forward the message to the staff, in Central and Eastern Finland. Initially the aim was to interview only English teachers who had experience of teaching children with SLI. It proved to be quite difficult to find an adequate number (seven) of English teachers to interview. One can speculate whether the lack of knowledge about SLI was the reason for difficulties in finding participants. It was decided in the end of April 2015 to interview both English teachers and special education teachers, which enabled the interesting comparison between English teachers' and special education teachers' perceptions. I interviewed four English teachers and three special education teachers. I received several emails from special education teachers stating that they were too busy and could not participate although they considered the topic to be very important.

The interviews were conducted in Finnish, since it was the mother tongue of all participants. Galletta (2012) explains that during the interview there are many types of interaction between the researcher and the participants, which include prompts, rephrases, meaning making, asking for clarification and encouraging and engaging the participant. These methods create a feeling of reciprocity, which motivates the interviewee. Hirsjärvi and Hurme (2008) add that an interviewer may summarize what the interviewee has said, but one must be careful not to interpret too much. The researcher may also recast and let the interviewee know that she is listening. Hirsjärvi and Hurme emphasize that motivating the interviewee can be made in many manners: body language, facial expressions and short encouraging utterances (such as *hmm, juu, niin*, in Finnish) can be used to message the interviewee that the researcher is interested in what he or she is saying. During the first interview I found it difficult not to comment or interpret the teacher's answers too much. In later interviews I also tried to refrain from overusing encouraging utterances and instead used more body language and facial expressions in order to keep the recordings clear.

I interviewed four English teachers who had taught or were teaching a group, in which there was a student with SLI. The teachers were all women. They had five to more than twenty years of teaching experience, for this reason the perceptions of novice teachers cannot be reviewed in this thesis. The English teachers are referred with numbers from one to four: English teacher 1(ET1) et cetera in this study.

**English teacher 1** had more than 20 years of teaching experience. She had little experience of people with SLI in her personal life, but a great amount of experience of them in school context.

**English teacher 2** had five and half years of teaching experience. She also had little experience of people with SLI or other learning disability outside school, but quite an amount of experience in a school context.

**English teacher 3** had 9 years of experience as English teacher, and one year as a special education teacher. She had a great deal of experience of people with SLI and other learning disabilities both in school and outside it.

**English teacher 4** had been a teacher for seven years. She had little experience outside school but plenty of experience of students with SLI in a school context.

Furthermore, I interviewed three special education teachers who had taught English to a student with SLI. All these teachers were women. The special education teachers are also referred with numbers from one to three: Special education teacher 1 (SET1) et cetera.

**Special education teacher 1** had 23 years of teaching experience. She stated that she probably had had at least one student with SLI every year.

**Special education teacher 2** had 17 years of teaching experience; she had first worked as a classroom teacher. She also had plenty of experience of students with SLI.

**Special education teacher 3** had 10 years of special education teaching experience and three years as a kindergarten teacher. She had only worked with students with language deficits.

All of the teachers taught in basic education in grades one through nine. In Finland English education begins commonly in the third grade at the age of eight or nine. The teachers resided in various cities in Finland. It was not relevant for the present study to compare regional variations, and for this reason subjects were not chosen from certain cities or regions in Finland. The interviews were conducted face to face in various locations, such as cafés and school classrooms that suited the participants. The interviews were recorded and later transcribed. The identity of the teachers nor the students cannot be recognized from the transcripts because all information considering the schools and cities are left out. The recordings range from 17 to 38 minutes, and in total there are 170 minutes of recordings.



The pilot interview was conducted in the end of March 2015. In the pilot there was not a question concerning the special teaching and/or exam arrangements taken with a student with SLI (question 12/13). I asked whether the interviewee wanted to add anything and she explained those arrangements. This question was added to the final set of interview questions. The pilot was included to this thesis because no other changes were made.

Galletta (2012:76) postulates that: “Your role is to keep one eye on where you are, and the other on where you’re headed.” It is important to recognize when to interrupt and ask for clarification, and when not to. The researcher should listen attentively and refer back to a matter later in the interview. Hirsjärvi and Hurme (2008) explain that a beginner interviewer often focuses too much on the preset list of questions and forgets to listen to the interviewee. After the interview it is vital for the interviewer to reflect on her role in the interview (Galletta 2012, Miles, Huberman and Saldaña 2014) and reflect on the participant’s experience (Galletta 2012). I agree with Galletta and Hirsjärvi and Hurme because in the first two interviews I had to focus very carefully on the question set and in retrospect I noticed that I could have asked for clarification or additional information.

### **4.3 Method of analysis**

I chose a data-based content analysis as the method of analysis because the data-driven, inductive method allows the participants’ views to be recognized and discussed without having to fit the findings into pre-existing categories or theories. The clear themes of the present thesis are: 1) attitudes towards inclusion, 2) attitudes towards segregation, 3) perception of coping 4) perception of competence, 5) characteristics of a SLI student and 6) teaching arrangements. In Appendix 3. Analysis process. the process of coding, clustering the codes and synthesizing the results can be seen.

Both Galletta (2012) and Miles, Huberman and Saldaña (2014) suggest a method of analysis that consists of coding, categorizing and synthesizing the data. Hirsjärvi and Hurme (2008) are in accordance with Galletta (2012) and Miles, Huberman and Saldaña (2014), they also propose the same procedures of reducing and coding the data, finding connections, synthesizing the results and discussing them in respect with the theory and research questions.

Galletta (2012) postulates that firstly the researcher must store the data properly, reflect upon the conducted interviews and check the accuracy of transcripts. Then the researcher may start to recognize early patterns and themes, which are given thematic codes. Miles, Huberman and Saldaña (2014) maintain that in the 1<sup>st</sup> cycle of coding **codes are assigned to chunks of text (data)**, which assists the researcher in finding related information more easily. The codes help clustering the segments related to a specific research question, hypothesis or theme. It is suggested that the codes are written in the right-hand margin. Miles, Huberman and Saldaña emphasize that coding is data condensation, which allows further analysis. Galletta (2012) recommends to keep a list of the codes, and to mark carefully which to include and which to discard.

Miles, Huberman and Saldaña (2014:74-86) indicate that there are many methods to code data, and I will present briefly the ones that are most suitable for this thesis. There are three elemental methods of coding: descriptive, in vivo and process coding. A descriptive code describes the chunk of data with one word, commonly a noun. The in vivo codes are short phrases taken from the participants' own language. The process codes are gerund forms describing actions in the data. Then there are three affective methods: emotion, values and evaluation. The emotion codes describe emotions experienced by the participant. The value codes portrait values, attitudes and beliefs, and the evaluation codes are judgments about significance or worth.

Researcher can attempt to use pre-existing codes or induct them according to one's own data. I used all of these code types during the first cycle because different types of codes allow the researcher to capture the essential items most accurately. As an example a chunk of text that describes a student with SLI was coded as good student and good at compensating, or a segment in which a teacher explained how to teach a student with SLI, I have codes such as more remedial teaching, less transitions and peers!. The majority of the assigned codes can be seen in the Appendix 3. Analysis process.

According to Galletta (2012) and Miles, Huberman and Saldaña (2014), the second step of analysis is **clustering codes under categories**. In this stage the researcher discovers relationships between the codes. The interrelations of the categories are investigated in order to construct higher order analytic means for hypothesis and theory development (Miles, Huberman and Saldaña 2014). Galletta (2012) explains that in this stage the codes viability in

respect with the research questions is assessed. According to Miles, Huberman and Saldaña (2014), common pattern codes (categories) include categories/themes, causes/explanations, relationship among people and theoretical constructs. At this point of analysis there were numerous categories, and many of them were overlapping.

Lastly, the **results are synthesized**: thematic relationships are explored in relation with the research questions, and conversation between data and theory are made. In this stage the researcher makes interpretations. (Galletta 2012, Miles, Huberman and Saldaña 2014.) Galletta (2012) proposes that graphic displays can aid the researcher in seeing connections and irregularities. Miles, Huberman and Saldaña (2014) propose several tactics for generating meaning, among others, noting reoccurring patterns, seeing plausibility (but not blindly trusting your initial perception), clustering, making metaphors, counting and making contrast or comparison. The overlapping categories were synthesized into fewer final categories that describe the findings accurately.

The analysis process of this study followed the data-based content analysis closely. The first course of action was transcribing the interviews. Then, I read through all of the transcripts, and started to assign initial codes to chunks of texts; for example, more remedial teaching, good students, revision and living question marks. Secondly, as suggested by Miles, Huberman and Saldaña (2014) I gathered similar codes under working categories; for example, such categories as good at compensating, difficulty with speech, structure and weak memory were created. Lastly, these working categories were explored more closely and results were synthesized. This means that the categories were investigated in relation with the research questions and theory. This process is described in Appendix 3.

According to Hirsjärvi and Hurme (2008), the traditional concepts of validity and reliability do not fit into the qualitative analysis of interviews without problems. They suggest that reliability concerns more the quality of the data and transcriptions' accuracy than the repeatability of the results. Validity, on the other hand, in a qualitative research concerns the credibility of the participants and their expertise on the matter. It is important to discuss possible difficulties with the interviews, explain the classification or coding process of the data and explain on what grounds interpretations were made.

## **5 TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS OF TEACHING STUDENTS WITH SLI**

In this section, I will discuss the findings of the present study. In the first chapter the teachers' attitudes towards including students with SLI to mainstream education will be presented. In addition, the teachers' views on segregation will be discussed. Next teachers' perceptions of adequacy of training, self-efficacy beliefs and coping are discussed. The third chapter presents how the teachers perceive the students with SLI, and the fourth chapter investigates what kind of methods and arrangements are used with students with SLI. In this section the findings are compared and contrasted with the theory about SLI and teaching students with SLI.

### **5.1 Teachers' attitudes towards including and segregating students with SLI**

As Forlin (2012) has formulated, the inclusive practices start from the education system and legislation. Secondly, teacher education providers must distribute the knowledge and ideal of inclusiveness, and lastly each individual teacher is responsible for carrying out the ideal into practice. Although one can claim that the Finnish school system has become more inclusive (see NCC 2014, ANCC 2010), three of the four English teachers (ET1, ET2, ET4) stated that they think that inclusion may not be the best option for everyone. English teacher 1 stated quite clearly that, in her opinion, inclusion suits some students better than others; however, she felt that students with special needs should not be isolated but the teaching methods should be modified to cater for their needs too.

- 1) It is this wonderful inclusion that we have. It suits other students better than others. It is difficult to give a black and white answer. There are students that can absolutely be integrated. Learning disability does not mean that somebody needs to be isolated, on the contrary, then you must rethink your teaching methods and adapt them. (ET1)

ET2 suggested that it would be in the interest of some of the students with SLI to be in a special education group because when the English education progresses to more advanced, the gap between the students grows too wide. Also ET4 was cautiously optimistic; she felt that if a student with SLI does not have, for example, ADHD or Asperger's combined with SLI, it is possible to teach the student in an inclusive classroom. She also added that she could not have multiple students with special needs in a classroom because then she would not have

enough time to guide and help all students because the students with special needs require more time than other students.

One of the English teachers supported inclusive practices unconditionally. ET3 reported that, in her opinion, the three-tier support model has worked very well and it should be followed. In her opinion, a student should be automatically in a mainstream education classroom, and if a student has a difficult period it is possible to study temporarily in a smaller group. This might be an ideal solution for many students because as mentioned in the NCC (2004) school should promote equality, communality and teach skills that are needed in life, and as mentioned in the NCC (2014) students should be active learners, who work with other students and teachers.

- 2) We follow the three tier support model of course, which means that, luckily, all children participate into the mainstream English education. Extremely rarely they are in special education and very rarely the reason is language impairment. - - I absolutely think that the best situation is that a child is automatically in mainstream education and there is a special needs assistant or a special education teacher. If there are rough patches, the student can then study with a special education teacher or in a small group. (ET3)

All in all, English teachers viewed integration as a possibility although they had their apprehensions about integrating everyone into mainstream education. The teachers' raised valid concerns; integration may not be the best option for everyone, would students with special needs be able to keep up with the rest of the group, and could the teacher manage with a student with a complex diagnosis. The apprehensions may be caused by the fact that teachers feel that they do not have the time and resources to teach a very heterogeneous group of students. Already currently teachers have a very limited time per student in schools. If there were multiple students with special needs in one classroom, the teacher would not be able to cater for all of their needs. Nowadays many teachers teach alone, but in the future, as the school culture will change due to the new NCC, cooperative teaching will be increased, and more often there will be two teachers in one classroom, which will decrease the pressure of a teacher to manage on his or her own.

The special education teachers answered that the placement of a student depends greatly on the severity of the impairment, the placement group and the student's qualities. Special education teacher 1 thought that students with SLI should be integrated but she also added

that those with very severe cases are in specific classrooms for students with dysphasia (SLI). Special education teacher 2 added that language problems are not static and the language status can change quite quickly, which is supported by the findings of Conti-Ramsden and Botting (1999). Conti-Ramsden and Botting (1999) found that a child's language status may improve in some areas of language because SLI is a dynamic condition. SET2 also stated that students with SLI should especially be integrated into the optional subjects.

It has been found in studies that children with SLI may suffer from a low self-esteem and other social issues, such as withdrawal, but it is not known whether social problems are co-occurring weaknesses or products of the language deficit (Leonard 2014:29). Special education teacher 3 emphasized the importance of ensuring that the child's psyche is strong enough, and he or she is realistic with his or her learning abilities and challenges. SET3 thought that if these conditions are met it is advisable to try inclusion.

- 3) It is so child-dependent. There are children who (can be integrated), and then of course the group where to integrate. Especially psyche is important, if it is strong, the child is realistic about his or her learning abilities, knows the challenges and still can work in his or her own level, then I think it is good idea to try integration. (SET3)

Also the special education teachers were cautiously optimistic towards integrating students with SLI into mainstream education. They suggested trying integration if the child is realistic about his or her abilities, and the integration group is suitable. SET2 highlighted that the language status of a student with SLI might not be static, and for that reason it is important to monitor the learning closely. It is noteworthy to highlight that the English teachers had apprehensions about inclusion and so did the special education teachers. The special education teachers' apprehensions towards inclusion may be explained by the fact that they have seen failed attempts to include a student, or that they consider special education as an appropriate learning environment for a student with severe language deficits.

It is clearly visible from the data that the special education teachers viewed special education as a way of positive discrimination, a privilege, and an opportunity for the student to learn with peers. They did not consider special education groups to be a form of negative segregation. SET3 considered a special education group as a peer group, where the student with SLI can notice that he or she is not stupid nor weak, but that SLI is a neurological problem, which affects learning. In her opinion, students with language problems should be

gathered to learn together in mainstream schools. She also thought that it is not advisable to leave out a language without trying how a student learns it.

- 4) I think that, for example, in mainstream education if they know that there are children with SLI, it would be wise to gather them to learn together in some classes, so that they do not get the idea that they are bad or stupid, but that they really have this neurological problem, which affects their learning. I think that that piece of information is very significant for building the psyche. I do not think that this is negative segregation, but a privilege for the children who have big problems in this field to feel good as they are. (SET3)

SET1 believed that the structure, smaller group size and the safe environment of the special education group allow more time for learning because a student does not have to worry about when to finish a task or to take out books. SET2 considered that there is more time per student in a special education group, and it might be uncomfortable for a student to be in a large group where he or she is not able to follow the teaching.

- 5) Well, the upside is that I have more time per student. And if we think that we are talking about very big, difficult problems with language, it is very inconvenient for a student to be in a big, strange group where he or she does not understand anything. (SET2)

In sum, special education is a safe, comfortable environment for students with special needs in the special education teachers' opinion. The special education teachers thought that it is possible to have more time per student, there is a clearer structure, and the support from peers is important. However, special education teachers regarded it to be possible to integrate students with SLI into mainstream education. It is not surprising that special education teachers consider special education to be a suitable learning environment for students with SLI. It is natural that they see the positive sides of special education, and the fact that students receive more personal instruction and teaching is a considerable advantage. Nevertheless, exclusion from others is against the ideal of inclusive, equal school system, and the lack of interaction with students in mainstream education underlines the dissimilarity of the students with learning impairments.

## 5.2 Teachers' perception of self-efficacy and coping

In this section I will discuss the teachers' beliefs of self-efficacy and coping. First I will discuss the teachers' views on the amount of education they have received about SLI. Then I will move on to present their self-efficacy views and the reasons for them. In the latter part, I will briefly summarize the central idea of self-efficacy by Bandura (1997).

### 5.2.1 Knowledge and education about SLI

Malinen and Savolainen (2012) have argued that the fact that mainstream education teacher training and special education teacher training are separate in Finland is a hindrance because there is a lack of cooperation between the teachers and faculties. Due to separate educations and training in universities' training schools, many mainstream education teachers have none to very little experience of students with special needs and teaching them. Although schools are becoming increasingly inclusive, the need for special education teachers will not disappear. On the contrary, their expertise will be needed in mainstream classes as more students will be integrated into mainstream education.

Malinen's and Savolainen's (2012) concerns are valid also in the light of the teachers' answers. Six of the seven interviewees stated that they had received little or no information about SLI in teacher training, and that they had had to seek for the information and training by themselves. For example, English teacher 2 argued that there was very little about SLI in her studies although she has graduated fairly recently. Furthermore, she felt that special education teachers in her school get all the training.

- 6) Very little. Now I think that only the special education teacher gets training. And then when I studied, which is not that long time ago, there was very little about that. (ET2)

One of the teachers, SET3, stated that she had made such choices that allowed her to gain information about SLI during her studies. She said that especially practical trainings had been the best part of the studies because she had learnt the most from the teachers she had worked with in the practical training periods.



- 7) I must have made such choices then, I have chosen that sort of courses - - I have done trainings in which I have received fortification, and I think that the trainings have been the best about studies because there I have learned from the teachers the most about the day-to-day work. (SET3)

Overall, it is fair to say that there is very little information about SLI in subject teacher and special education teacher training. One can argue that SLI is not very commonly known language learning difficulty amongst teachers. The previous studies on this topic by Malinen et al (2013), Dockrell and Lindsay (2001) and Brackenreed (2008) support the finding of this thesis. In all of the three previous studies teachers voiced that they had very little training and information about the language impairment and other learning disabilities, and they were concerned about classroom management and their ability to support the students with special needs.

The importance of self-initiative and in-service training is very visible from the data. English teacher 1 and English teacher 4 had studied the basic studies in special-needs education, English teacher 2 had completed some special education studies, and English teacher 3 had special education teacher qualification. One can speculate that the teachers had noticed that they needed more information about teaching students with special needs either when they were studying or later already in work-life. What is more, is that all of the teachers' stated that they had sought the training themselves; in other words, the teachers had had to take the initiative themselves. ET4 thought that it is the teacher's own fault if they had not received enough training, and she also stated that she is not interested in more training about SLI.

- 8) Yes, I have sought it myself, in open university. - - Well there is training if you look for it yourself. It is the person's own fault if he or she has not received training. (ET4)

English teacher 2 stated that there is an overall lack of information about SLI, and she would like to have more training and information. She thought that knowing theory about SLI would be helpful, and naturally learning practical ways of how to teach students with SLI would be useful. ET3 explained that she would be interested in learning more about early language learning, but the cost of training had stopped her from participating in more in-service training.

- 9) Well yes if this is the trend in teaching, I think it should be offered and given a change because now you do not have the knowledge or tools to plan the teaching. - - It might be important for many teachers to know some scientific theory of what does that even mean. Then of course practical ways or some sort of workshops, what is it about, and how it is visible in how they learn. (ET2)

SET1 and SET2 had received some amount of information about SLI in the special education teacher training but they had also gained more information in in-service training. They both stated that they might like to have more training. SET2 explained that she would be interested in finding how to use, for example, iPads with students who have language problems.

- 10) Yes, mainly in in-service training. There was not much then in special education teacher studies. - - More training would not hurt but I have sought after training myself so it does not feel unfamiliar. (SET1)

SET3 considered that she had received a good amount of information about SLI already in teacher training and in in-service training because she had been able to participate in her own workplace's tuition and in other trainings also. However, she felt that there is still more to learn, and she would like to increase her knowledge about SLI. She had just recently thought about finding more information about the effects of psyche and cases when the diagnosis is very complex.

- 11) - I think that I have received a good amount of training. But there are situations when the combination of diagnosis and special needs of a child is such complex that I wonder that who could I ask about this, and does anyone know about this. - - If the difficulties intertwine with the child's psychological wellbeing, and how it affects the language, it is a topic that I don't have much training about. I have not searched information about this before because I have only recently started to think about it. This is a topic that I would like to get more information about because it seems to be quite relevant. (SET3)

The interviewed teachers had realized the need for more information and training, and had sought after it themselves. ET2 vocalized the need for more in-service training the most clearly because, in her opinion, the special education teachers in her school are in the priority for in-service training (see excerpt 6.) The teachers had received varied amounts of in-service training about learning disabilities and SLI in particular. Only one teacher, ET4, stated that she was not interested in more training about SLI; the rest of the teachers considered that more training could be useful, or they had clear ideas of what kind of training they would like to have.

### 5.2.2 Perception of coping

Bandura (1997) explains that the self-efficacy beliefs of teachers consist of knowledge of the subject matter, classroom management, enlisting resources, parents' involvement and motivating the students. Bandura claims that if a teacher has low self-efficacy beliefs he or she might shy away from challenges and recover slowly from setbacks. If a teacher has high self-efficacy beliefs, he or she will try harder and is more resilient. Furthermore, what has an effect on the teacher's self-efficacy is the perception of coping with differentiation. It is emphasized in the ANCC (2010) that differentiation demands a great amount of knowledge from a teacher because he or she must have an understanding of the learning processes, and be able to monitor and evaluate learning processes and outcomes carefully.

English teacher 1 stated that inclusion demands more work from her but she does not consider it to be too demanding. ET2 and ET4 explained that the special education resource is weak in their school, but they are still able to cope with the situation quite well. English teacher 3 reminisced the difficulties she had had with a demanding student in the past, but stated that the current situation had improved a great deal.

English teacher 1 stated that they had a really good situation in their school because they could have a special education teacher in the classroom, especially when there was more than one student with special needs participating to tuition. She clarified that she did not feel that integration was too demanding or difficult but she admitted that it required more work.

- 12) Well we have a wonderful situation in our school because we have special education resources at our disposal. And I have had a supportive teacher in the classroom in some cases when my own resources have not been enough because there are various different difficulties in one group. It has been great to have support from special education at least part-timely that has helped a lot. But I do not think that it is (too challenging), it takes more effort but. (ET1)

English teacher 2 and English teacher 4 had very similar experiences. English teacher 2 said that there was very little special education for English. English teacher 4 also thought that the special education resource in their school was very weak. However, they felt that the fact that they had one weekly lesson in which they teach only half of the class, and another weekly lesson with the whole class with a special needs assistant in the classroom, worked well.

- 13) Yes inclusion, special-needs education is available but not for English, I feel that I have to manage on my own. - - Admittedly now when I think about this I feel that everything is quite alright although it does not feel like that always. We have lessons for half of the class at the time and smaller group for those who have diagnosis and learning plan. So we have a class for half of the group at the time, and then on the other class with the whole group we have a special needs assistant. (ET2)

English teacher 3 thought that teaching a student with SLI is extremely interesting. However, in the past when she had a student with selective mutism she would have liked to have more tools, a special needs assistant in the classroom and more cooperation with a special education teacher. However, she felt that the situation had improved a great deal.

The special education teachers reported that teaching a student with SLI is challenging, but they did not consider it to be too demanding or difficult because they could use similar methods with students with SLI as they used with other students in special education. Special education teacher 3 stated that she wished that she had two assistants in the English lessons; nevertheless, she was coping well with the situation.

Special education teacher 1 said that it is challenging to teach a student with SLI, but the measures used with them do not hurt other students; on the contrary, all students can benefit from them. She emphasized that lessons in the special education are very similar for all kinds of students. However, with students with SLI she has to consider her own teaching more; how to speak, the speech tempo and to have an eye contact. Special education teacher 2 had very similar views, she thought that it is no different to teach a special education group with a student with SLI in it or not. She also believed that the most challenging thing is to think how to express matters and to focus to relevant matters.

- 14) It is challenging, but those methods that are used with children with SLI fit also the students who do well in languages and succeed because they also help those who do well. - - The methods aren't very different except that I have to focus on my own actions more: how do I speak, what is my speech tempo, I have to face the child when I'm speaking, I have an eye contact, the student can see me and the matters are visualized. But those same things are taken into consideration with other children, even though they don't have difficulties with language. (SET1)

Special education teacher 3 reported that she has a special needs assistant in her class but it might be reasonable to have two because one student needs the assistant's attention 80 per cent of the time. However, SET3 reported that, in her opinion, it is easier for her to teach English to students with SLI than it is for English teachers in mainstream education, because

the groups are very heterogeneous there. Furthermore, she observed that it is possible for her to know the students better and understand their needs, which makes teaching them easier.

- 15) I think that it is nothing more than teaching; English teachers have much more heterogeneous groups in mainstream education. Here we know the children's difficulties, and we know most of the time the ways how to teach them; to whom visual teaching works and if they have difficulties with conceptualization, we know what kinds of difficulties they have. But in a mainstream education group you cannot know the children with this precision, and you have to guess more and find the middle way without taking anyone's specialties into consideration. (SET3)

Although the teachers had concerns and apprehensions about teaching students with SLI, they felt that they were able to cope quite well. All of the teachers stated that it was challenging to teach a student with SLI, or that they had had some difficulties, but the overall assessment they made of their coping was positive. This finding was not surprising because it is the nature of people to find ways to cope in a situation. The participants of this study had realized a lack of information about SLI and had pursued more training and information about it. Furthermore, the schools had made arrangements that made coping possible. These arrangements include smaller group sizes, special needs assistants, cooperative teaching and special education resource.

### **5.3 Characteristics of students with SLI**

In this section I will describe the strengths and weaknesses of students with SLI according to the teachers' observations. Perhaps expectedly the teachers were able to name a greater number of weakness compared to the strengths. However, the teachers spoke about the students in a positive manner and emphasized their positive qualities.

#### **5.3.1 Strengths of students with SLI**

The teachers were asked to name the strengths of a student with SLI; the two aspects that were emphasized were that they are "good students", and they are good at compensating their language difficulties. A good student in this context means that the students are quiet, hardworking and do not cause disruption in class. English teacher 4 stated that, in her experience, students with SLI are very kind and hardworking. She pointed out that the diligence helps students to succeed. Also, Special education teacher 2 considered students with SLI to be hardworking and conscientious.

- 16) This one student is very kind, he/she does everything I ask, and in my experience many of them are very hardworking. In my opinion, if one has enough motivation, the diligence can replace a lot. (ET4)

It is important to remember that children with SLI perform well in non-linguistic IQ tests, and they do not suffer from general developmental delay nor neurological impairment (Schwartz 2009), which would affect their intellectual qualities. Hence, it is not surprising that according to ET1 students with SLI are good at compensating the language problems by using different approaches. ET3 thought that students with SLI are forced to innovate new ways of coping. SET1 considered SLI to be a different way of thinking and perceiving the world, rather than an obstacle. SET1 had noticed that students with SLI are very good at innovating new ways of thinking and executing tasks.

- 17) Learning disability is not a hindrance. It is a different way of perceiving this world. It can be innovative, and one has to think and use senses and ways differently than most of the people. It innovates. And if the child is given a change, he or she innovates a new way of thinking and executing and finding methods. It is not necessarily always a hindrance. (SET1)

In addition, SET3 and ET4 considered students with SLI to be visually talented. SET3 specified that, in her opinion, they have strong visual learning abilities and visual memory, which helps them to learn a new language, for example.

- 18) Well, visual learning ability is in general very strong for these children, and visual memory is very strong too. It is something that helps with English in the beginning too. Children are very talented in finding familiar words and learning that way. (SET3)

Next the weaknesses of students with SLI will be discussed. The participants of this study were able to name a great number of weaknesses that were divided into four groups. These weaknesses, or characteristics of students with SLI are discussed in accordance with theory about SLI. Knowing the manifestations of SLI in Finnish children may help teachers to recognize language impairment in their students, and to understand their language status and learning process better.

### 5.3.2 Weaknesses of students with SLI

As discussed earlier, there are many different manifestations of SLI. According to Leonard (2014), grammatical impairment is the hallmark of SLI. However, SLI can have many other manifestations. In accordance with Rapin (Rapin and Allen 1983, cited in Rapin 1996:645-648) specific language impairment can be divided into three subcategories that are mixed expressive-receptive, expressive and higher order processing disorders (see chapter 2.1.2 for a more comprehensive explanation). The mixed expressive-receptive disorders are characterized by difficulties both in language expression and reception, and in the most severe cases can lead into auditory word deafness and being almost nonverbal. The expressive disorders are characterized by an impairment in language expression; a child may speak only short words that are often distorted or lacking consonants, or in another variant a child may produce long utterances that are grammatically and phonologically flawed. Lastly, the higher order processing disorders manifest as difficulties in producing speech on demand, or producing utterances that are inappropriate in that context; for example, a child may provide answers off the point although he or she knows the answer. The purpose of the present thesis was not to categorize the students into subtypes, but the knowledge of different subtypes helps to understand the diverse nature of SLI, and one can notice evidence of different subtypes in the students that the participants of this study had taught.

The teachers named a great number of difficulties that I have divided into four groups. The groups are 1) weakness of central executive, 2) expressive language difficulties, 3) receptive language difficulties and 4) difficulties in social life.

Firstly, I will discuss the weakness of central executive. Gillam, Montgomery and Gillam (2009) state that one of the affected areas with children with SLI is the central executive. The weakness of the central executive is manifested through memory problems, which include holding information and retrieving it. In addition, difficulties in maintaining attention may be common for children with SLI because of the ineffective central executive. The participants of this study identified problems with memory and conceptualization. The interviewed teachers reported that students experience difficulties with short-term and working memory, also problems with long-term memory occur.

English teacher 1 reported that she had noticed that students with SLI are slow to function in a classroom and manifest difficulties with working memory and short-term memory. Special education teacher 3 explained the difficulties with memory in greater detail; in her experience students with SLI are not able to hold information for extended periods of time, which makes all learning difficult. She argued that students forget information relatively quickly.

- 19) Usually, how it can be seen in a classroom is slowness, and difficulties with working memory and short-term memory. (ET1)
- 20) For quite many memory is a challenge. Something seems to sink in quite well in one class, and when we return to it, for example this year we have classes on Tuesday and Friday, may be that on Friday they cannot remember anything from the Tuesday's class. Weekend seems to clear their heads even more completely. It seems that they can hold information better from Tuesday to Friday than from Friday to next Tuesday. Memory is something that has a great impact on all learning. (SET3)

The teachers reported that the students had difficulties with abstract tasks and had difficulties in linguistic deduction. These observations made by the participants of this study are well in line with research results; Leonard (2014) has found that children with SLI have difficulties with symbolic play and mental imagery. English teacher 2 reported that she had noticed that students with SLI have difficulties with more abstract task types and creative tasks. Furthermore, they have difficulties with comprehending concepts, and, for example, inventing words related to a concept. English teacher 4 explained that she has noticed that students with SLI have weak linguistic deduction; they might know words *I, have, a cat* individually, but still are unable to form a sentence from them.

Also the problems with self-esteem can hinder students' participation into classroom activities. ET1, ET2 and ET4 considered students with SLI to be more passive: they do not want to talk aloud in class, they are not active nor willing to try, and not very self-directed.

- 21) More quiet, not active in any ways in classes, and do not disturb in any way. But very passive and they lack self-initiative. (ET2)
- 22) - -They are not very active. I have noticed that there are difficulties there, and it takes more time to motivate them. Of course they get excited about games and playing, but I feel that initially they are very timid in many things. Some of them mask it with fooling around, but in my experience they are those who do not have the courage to try. (ET4)



Although children with SLI do well in non-linguistic IQ tests, they may have weaknesses in nonverbal abilities such as mental imagery and hypothesis testing, which may be detected in difficulties in some school subjects (Leonard 2014). In addition, Schwartz (2009:3) has found that children with SLI may have difficulties with problem solving and mathematics. SET1 explained that she had noticed that the delayed language learning in childhood has had an effect on many school subjects, such as mathematics, languages and Finnish because children with SLI have been able to function with language for a shorter time than same-aged peers. ET4 added that she had noticed that if she has a concern about a student's progress in English most likely the class teacher has concerns about the student's progress in many other subjects too.

- 23) They are usually quite weak in all subjects. Even though I just teach English to many groups, and I say to the class teacher that I am concerned about this student, many times the class teacher says that he/she is concerned about many other subjects, too. (ET4)

Secondly, the teachers identified expressive language difficulties. The expressive language difficulties are characterized in ICD-10 as deficits in spoken language, which indicates that the child's level of expressive language is below the age-appropriate level, and the child may or may not have difficulties with articulation, but language comprehension is normal. These children would be categorized into expressive language disorder subgroup according to Rapin (1996).

McGregor (2009) has found that children with SLI might have a semantic deficit, which is characterized by difficulties in conveying meaning of words and sentences. According to Fletcher (2009), children with SLI might manifest difficulties with syntax, which can be detected from the difficulties in combining sentences, and using and understanding the coordinating and subordinating conjunctions. Both of these deficits in semantics and syntax complicate the children's communication and comprehension because it is difficult for them to understand connected speech and to communicate effectively. ET1, ET2 and ET4 had taught students who had severe difficulties with forming sentences.

Leonard (2014) explains that children with SLI are slow to learn first words, they often have difficulties with finding words and they use non-specific words. Rapin (1996) adds that a subtype of higher order processing deficits is characterized by severe difficulties in finding words and producing language on demand. English teacher 3 had noticed such difficulties and

explained that students with SLI use a great amount of circumlocutions and paraphrases because they cannot find the words. ET3 said that sometimes the children's pain is tangible because they are unable to communicate their thoughts.

Hook and Haynes (2009) explain that the difficulties with reading and writing are caused by deficits in phonological awareness, orthographic processing, working memory and fluency. Children with SLI experience difficulties with writing because they are unable to keep information in their working memory and they have deficits in phonological awareness, which entails a sense of rhyming and awareness of syllables and sounds in a word. Dufva, Vaarala and Pitkänen (2007) state that it is especially difficult for Finnish students with SLI to learn English because of the discrepancy between orthography and phonology in English, which does not exist in Finnish. They suggest focusing students' attention onto new words and their writing. ET1 clarified that it is challenging for the students to learn how to write words in English because the students write the words as they are pronounced.

- 24) - - Then in writing you can see that it is impossible to match the orthography and phonology, for example, they write always piipöl or futpool. The way you pronounce interferes with writing. - - And then the incomprehensibility of syntax, which reveal the lack of idea in expression. (ET1)

Kunnari et al (2011) found that Finnish children with SLI had three distinct difficulties with language, one of them is, a difficulty to recognize agglutinated tense and agreement suffixes. Since Finnish children with SLI struggle with Finnish suffixes, it is only natural that they have difficulties with them both in Finnish and English. According to Rapin (1996), the most common subtype of SLI is the phonologic/syntactic deficit disorder which is characterized by a language that is impoverished and ungrammatical, with impaired phonology and narrow vocabulary. In addition, Oetting and Hadley (2009) have found that children with SLI have difficulties with with plural *-s*, progressive *-ing*, articles, regular past *-ed* and auxiliary *do*. Leonard (2009:434) adds that the most common problem in English is the deficit in using morphemes to mark the tense and agreement. Special education teacher 1 and Special education teacher 2 had both had students with such deficits in spoken language. Furthermore, Rapin (1996) explains that a child with SLI may have difficulties with language comprehension and communicates in very short, grammatically incorrect utterances. Special education teacher 1 explained that she had had students who had a telegram like speech, which entails the lack of suffixes, wrong inflections and strange sentences in Finnish.

- 25) -- Then there might be problems with apraxia - - Then there is the most severe when both of expression and production are impaired. Then I have had students whose speech is telegram-like. They are lacking many features of Finnish, for example, the use of suffixes, wrong inflections and the sentences a child forms are very strange. (SET1)

Furthermore, Rapin (1996) has found that children with SLI may speak with impoverished, short utterances, which have impaired phonology and very limited vocabulary. This characterization summarizes Special education teacher 2's experiences. SET2 explained that students with SLI have difficulties in finding words, naming things and reading comprehension. Furthermore, the students make spelling errors, geminate errors, inflection errors and have difficulties with tenses. Hook and Haynes (2009) clarify that the reading difficulties are caused by, among others, very limited verbal working memory and a lack of automaticity of word identification. The limited verbal working memory makes it very difficult for a child to hold information and comprehend a sentence because by the end of the sentence the child may not remember the beginning of it.

- 26) Difficulty in finding words, difficulty in naming things, difficulties in reading comprehension, a great number of spelling errors in writing, geminate errors, difficult to inflect, rhythm the language and then grammar, tenses can be difficult. (SET2)

Thirdly, receptive language difficulties were identified. According to the ICD-10, the receptive language disorder is characterized by difficulties in understanding language and deficits in word-sound production are rather typical. Leonard (2009) proposes that difficulties in language reception are due to deficits in processing and storing language information, which are caused by the deficits in phonological working memory and working memory. In practice it means that a child needs more exposures to learn new words, and the limited capacity of working memory might prevent the comprehension of complex sentences. What is more, severe difficulties in language reception may make it very difficult for a child to follow a lesson or a conversation. (Leonard 2009.)

Gillam, Montgomery and Gillam (2009) remind that it is very difficult for a student with SLI to learn language only by hearing it because it is difficult for the student to focus one's attention and remember the sequences of words, associate their meaning and store information. For this reason, students with SLI do not benefit from communicative experiences as much as their peers, and it is difficult for them to receive instruction only

orally (Gillam, Montgomery and Gillam 2009). According to McGregor (2009:365), a semantic deficit means difficulties in understanding and conveying meanings of sentences and extended speech, which can be detected as difficulties in understanding connected speech and storylines. This can be seen in a classroom because it is difficult for a student with SLI to grasp the main idea of a message, act according to instructions and he or she may struggle with reading comprehension. Special education teacher 3 stated that it is impossible to base the teaching solely on auditory information. Special education teacher 2 supported the view, and went on to add that it is very difficult for students with SLI to notice the main points from the speech.

- 27) In principal you cannot base your teaching on auditory information, you have to have visual elements too. (SET3)
- 28) -- And receiving instructions might be extremely difficult. It is difficult to find the main points in the speech. (SET1)

Fourthly, the teachers raised difficulties concerning the social life. Ervast and Leppänen (2010a), ICD-10 and Leonard (2014) have found that children with SLI are prone to have social issues. Leonard (2014) ponders whether the social issues are co-occurring weaknesses or whether they are the side products of language deficits. SET3 characterized students with SLI as living question marks. She added that students with SLI seem to be dependent on trustworthy adults, but a teacher must be careful not to pressure students on mistakes because the students want to please the teacher and may take criticism very heavily. Whatever is the primary cause and what is the consequence, two teachers (ET3 and SET2) mentioned that students with SLI have troubles in their relationships because of misunderstandings. ET3 explained that in her experience students with SLI have a great amount of difficulties in perceiving the world around them and communicating with the others due to the language impairment.

- 29) If I use a colloquialism, they are a bit lost. Perceiving the world and living with a language is difficult. There are a lot of misunderstandings, depending on the child's temperament he or she pulls away or gets irritated of course, when he or she does not get understood. (ET3)

Although majority of the research on SLI has been conducted with English speaking children with SLI, it seems that Finnish children with SLI manifest very similar difficulties with language. The participants of this study had the most experience of students who had

expressive language difficulties; students struggled with expressing themselves and had severe difficulties in producing phonologically and grammatically correct utterances. What has the greatest impact on the learning of students with SLI, is the weaknesses of the central executive. These weaknesses can be seen as difficulties with working memory, holding and retrieving information, maintaining attention and completing abstract tasks. Although these children have normal non-linguistic IQs, they need more exposures to new words and pieces of information before they are able to learn them, which requires a great amount of revision.

Next I will present various methods of differentiation and teaching arrangements, which have made it possible for students with SLI to be in mainstream education, and that are in use in special education. We will notice that both the English teachers and the special education teachers use very similar methods that not only benefit the students with SLI but also the other students in the teaching group. Furthermore, it is evident that the methods are not extraordinary nor very difficult to use, but they require knowledge and willingness from the teacher.

#### **5.4 Teaching arrangements**

In Finland schools follow the three-tier support system (presented in detail in chapter 3.1.2). The three tiers are general support, intensified support and special support (ANCC 2010). General support is the support level for all students, and it consists of, among others, differentiation, flexible grouping, remedial teaching, and a student can have a special needs assistant or learning aids in the classroom. Intensified support consists of similar methods but they are used more consistently and intensively, and a pedagogical assessment including student's learning status and support methods is drawn. Also, a learning plan must be formulated, which is a tool for the teacher and the student to monitor the learning process. Lastly, special support entails all support methods, including full-time special-needs education. A student in special support must have a pedagogical statement and an individual education plan, which contains the learning goals, support methods, assessment methods and learning abilities of the student. Special support decisions must be revised on regular basis, and if it is decided that a student does not need special support anymore, he or she will receive intensified support.

It is stated in the National Core Curriculum (2014) that school administration is responsible for removing all obstacles of learning and organizing necessary support. Each teacher is responsible for recognizing learning difficulties and ensuring that students receive the support they need. In this chapter I will explain what kinds of teaching arrangements teachers take with students with SLI. The reader will notice that both the characteristics and teaching methods are in accordance with the previous literature and studies discussed in the present study.

#### **5.4.1 Revision and preparations**

Students with SLI can receive language interventions such as imitation, modeling, focus stimulation, milieu teaching or conversation recasting based approaches (Leonard 2014). Leonard (2014) explains that milieu teaching and conversation recasting are more free activities, such as playing games, and imitation and modelling are drill-like, controlled exercises. He thinks that more focus should be placed on providing ideal language input, which includes, frequent target forms. In a classroom context a teacher can offer a great amount of target language input and reiterate key phrases and forms, which provides the student with SLI opportunities to hear and learn useful phrases. Furthermore, repeating new words and sentences is a form of imitation and modelling language interventions. The most used form in a classroom might be milieu teaching that is when the student learns functional language skills in a natural environment, which might be a game situation or while completing a task.

McGregor (2009) suggests to concretize words and to give enough time and possibilities for repetition because this will help the students who have semantic difficulties to learn new words. Furthermore, Dufva, Vaarala and Pitkänen (2007) emphasize the importance of revising questions and providing enough language stimuli so that students with SLI can understand the message the teacher wants to communicate. English teacher 1 and English teacher 2 emphasized that revision and repetition are very important for students with SLI. Special education teacher 1 stressed the importance of giving short instructions and making sure that students understand them. Special education teacher 2 added that she must make comprehension checks and focus students' attention on important matters and explain grammar items multiple times.

- 30) Usually we have to go matters through more slowly and check understanding. Maybe you have to explain things multiple times, for example, grammar items must be explained many times. Then these comprehension checks must be made, for example, listen and pay attention to this, and then check if they understood what was said in the exercise. (SET2)

Baglieri and Shapiro (2011) point out that it is important to allow the student time to learn the expectations of a class, routines and procedures before focusing onto subject matter. Special education teacher 1 explained that it is vital to allow the students time to learn new working methods; in her opinion, it is not possible to do new things in the spur of the moment because the students need a considerable time to learn new working methods. For this reason, it is difficult to do a new type of task in the middle of the lesson.

- 31) When we do something that we have not done before, we have to reserve significantly more time for it. For example, we cannot do a new quick and fun exercise in the middle of the lesson because it takes us an hour to do something like that -- . (SET3)

It is stated in the NCC (2004:16) that a learning environment must be physically, psychologically and socially safe, and to support the students' learning. Baglieri and Shapiro's (2011) suggest that a teacher should consider seating arrangements and reduce unnecessary sounds and other environmental barriers. English teacher 1 reported that she does everything she can do in the classroom to help the students with SLI; for instance, she sets the seating in a manner that allows the student with SLI to maximize the focus and minimize all distractions. This is because students with SLI may have difficulties with inhibiting irrelevant stimuli, self-regulation and maintaining attention due to weaknesses in the central executive (Gillam, Montgomery and Gillam 2009). Leonard (2014) reminds that SLI and ADHD are two distinct deficits, which may be co-occurring, but most often the attention deficits caused by weaknesses in the central executive combined with comprehension problems result into behavior resembling ADHD, not ADHD per se. ET1 also communicates closely with the homes, as suggested in the NCC (2004), which allows her to take into consideration the parents' wishes.

- 32) -- I try to do everything I can do in the class; I set the seating so that I can maximize the focus and minimize the distractions if the student has difficulties with maintaining attention and focus. In addition, it is not irrelevant who is sitting next to the student. Then communication with homes, I am in contact with the homes and take into consideration the parents' wishes. -- (ET1)

Baglieri and Shapiro (2011) encourage teachers to clearly distinguish the end of each topic by pausing and monitoring turn taking. Special education teacher 1 explained that it is very important to slow down the speech tempo, give short instructions and have a clear structure when teaching students with SLI. She maintained that it is very helpful for a student to know the structure because then they can anticipate and reorient to a new topic. Baglieri and Shapiro (2011) suggest informing the students on how long they have for each task and clearly separating one task from other.

- 33) -- We teachers are such motor mouths that always when there is a student with SLI in the class you have to slow down your speech tempo and give short instructions. Then the structure of the lesson must be so that the student knows what comes next, and the student can anticipate and reorient to what is happening next. Usually it helps the student to have visual signs of what is going to happen next, and what is the structure of the lesson. (SET1)

English teacher 1 maintained that she tries to minimize the transitions from one book to another, because she has noticed that often she has to go and show the page to the student. English teacher 3 added that she has to plan and create a structure that suits the student, and then place the lesson plan on the student's desk or on the wall for everyone to see. In addition, Special education teacher 3 reported that they have in many lessons a certain structure so that the children know what will be done in which order. Structure and familiarity seem to be very helpful for students with SLI.

Baglieri and Shapiro (2011) recommend that information should be provided both in writing and orally. SET1 also considered this to be true. She explained how to support the weaker senses. It was central in Special education teacher 1's opinion to use only one format at a time; she does not speak when she has her back turned at the students. She maintained that when she speaks she has to have an eye-contact with the students.

- 34) Probably the most important thing to remember is to use only one format at a time. I do not speak and write at the same time, and I do not ask the child to speak and write the same time either, but have only one sense in use at the time. If it is weak, how to support it; should the information be visualized. Of course eye-contact is extremely important; when I write to the board or I have my back at the students, I do not speak. (SET1)

English teacher 3 discussed a factor no other teacher raised; the possible aggression of the SLI student. She said that it is very important to have two learning spaces ready in case a student has an outburst of aggression. These aggression spurs may be caused by the extreme frustration due to comprehension problems.



- 35) It requires planning ahead from the teacher. May be, depending on the group, that you have to think of one or two spaces with an adult, where to send the children if they have aggression; one is not necessarily enough. So you have to have the learning spaces decided in advance, where to send whom, and which adult is there. (ET3)

Revising language matters is very important because many students with SLI have difficulties with memory. The participants of this study emphasized the planning in advance that includes deciding seating arrangements, planning the lesson so that there are no unnecessary transitions from one book to another, and allowing enough time to learn new procedures. It is central to structure the lesson well, keep instructions short, face the students when talking to them and provide instructions both orally and in writing. Next I will present differentiation methods that the participants of this study have found useful.

#### **5.4.2 Differentiation during lessons and exams**

The learning objectives of the NCC (2014) emphasize that students should learn language, cultural and language learning skills. In grades 3-6 (ages 8 to 13) students learn to communicate about themselves and matters close to their everyday life, later in grades 7-9 (ages 12 to 16) they will learn to discuss more abstract topics, learn different communication strategies and cultural knowledge. The new NCC (2014) puts more emphasis on the multicultural nature of the English speaking world, and the goal is that students' language use is natural and appropriate in each context. The student is seen as an independent and active agent, rather than a passive receiver of knowledge.

In the ANCC (2010:5) differentiation is described as the primary means of taking the needs of a student into account; this includes considering the student's learning style, abilities, interests and emotional needs. According to the ANCC (2010), differentiation can be executed on three different levels, which are the extent of studies, the depth of studies and the progress rate. The teacher can choose less demanding materials, allow more time, and offer different choices for completing a task. The choices should be made in such a manner that the student can demonstrate his or her abilities in different ways. Furthermore, the teacher can group students flexibly and use available learning spaces in a flexible way which allows students to work in an undisturbed manner. Moreover, it is stated in the NCC (2014) that if a student has language deficits, it is possible to use alternative or augmentative communication methods,

and if there is a special needs assistant in a classroom, the assistant's support should help the student to take responsibility for his or her learning and develop a good self-esteem.

Oetting and Hadley (2009) explain that children with SLI, who have morphosyntactic deficits, benefit from simplifying the rules of a language and prioritizing. Three teachers raised the importance of prioritizing. English teacher 4 maintained that, in her opinion, it is very important to choose what to focus on, and what is relevant to learn. In her opinion, the most important aspect is that the child learns to communicate in English and has the courage to use the language. Special education teacher 2 is in accordance with ET4; SET2 also claimed that learning vocabulary and having courage to communicate in English is central. SET2 added that grammar is not that important and they study only the most important rules well. Hook and Haynes (2009) maintain that children with SLI benefit from explicit teaching of grammar rules because then they can understand the rules that structure the language.

- 36) In my opinion, the most important thing is that the child learns something, and that the child has the courage to say something in English. We have one student in the sixth grade who has an individual educational plan, with him/her we study those things that are useful in life so that he/she could communicate even little in English. We do not try to do anything too difficult. (ET4)

There are various learning goals in the NCC (2004, 2014), but if it seems that it is not realistic to strive towards those goals, the teaching should be differentiated. A teacher can choose less demanding materials, have a slower progressing pace and allow different ways to complete a task. English teacher 2 explained that, in her opinion, the teacher should consider what is relevant for the student to learn, and what are the realistic goals. In her opinion, it is advisable to lower the expectations if it is not possible for the student to meet all the learning goals.

- 37) - - When the gap starts to grow, it is very important to think of the goals, make a learning plan, and decide what is really important and useful for the student. Is it that the student learns to use conditional and future tenses perfectly when they do not know how to write dog and cat? I think that the teacher should be lenient and realize that if this is how the teaching is organized, I must lower the expectations. I have noticed that the student is also happy that he or she does not have to try to learn things that are not realistic, at least with the current teaching amount. -- (ET2)

Students with special needs may use simplified textbooks that are specially designed for the students with special needs and immigrant students. These books contain simplified exercises and texts, and usually there are fewer exercises in them. These books do not seem to be very

much in use because only one of the interviewed teachers used them. Other teachers explained that the textbooks they use are designed so that there are simpler and more demanding exercises in them. What is more, this one teacher, English teacher 4, was not very pleased with the simplified textbook. In her opinion, the book was plain, ugly and poorly organized, and did not please the student.

- 38) - - I have one student who uses a textbook for special needs students but I am not very pleased with it. It is easier, but it is plain and ugly and the child does not like the book. It is very unfortunate to use it. It is difficult to use it because the numbering does not match with the others' textbook. Furthermore, there are in fact too few exercises for the student, so I am not very pleased with the simplified textbook. (ET4)

Dufva, Vaarala and Pitkänen (2007) recommend providing students with SLI with more structured multiple choice exercises because it is often difficult for them to recall words and discuss abstract matters. English teacher 3 explained that by using working stations in the classroom she can guide the student (with SLI) to choose exercises that are the most suitable for him or her, and still the student can participate in the same classroom activity as the others. English teacher 4 explained that in her English class she has a table where students study with a special needs assistant. ET4 instructs on each lesson who gets to study with the assistant, but the student with SLI is always one of the students to study with the assistant. English teacher 1 clarified that she differentiates so that everyone does some amount of tasks, and then the quicker ones can do more. She uses similar methods during lessons and when assigning homework.

- 39) - - I differentiate the teaching so that the requirement for everyone is to do this much and you can do more. Then you can differentiate the homework. Everyone is required to do something but... (ET1)

It is important to remember that the students' persona can never be assessed; the student should always have multiple different ways and opportunities to demonstrate his or her language abilities, and even the mildest learning disabilities and language deficits must be taken into consideration when evaluating students (NCC 2014). Dufva, Vaarala and Pitkänen (2007) suggest that each student's strengths are taken into consideration, and the student can take an exam orally or in writing depending on the student's strengths. Dufva, Vaarala and Pitkänen (2007) also encourage providing a simpler language version of a text or exercise if necessary. Although dyslexia and SLI are separate deficits, children with SLI may have

difficulties with reading and writing, and in particular with reading comprehension (Leonard 2014:171). These deficits in reading and writing are caused by problems with phonological awareness, orthographic process, working memory, automaticity and fluency (Hook and Haynes 2009). Hence, a teacher must take into consideration these difficulties when compiling and grading an exam.

English teacher 1 explained that in her class the students with SLI have more time to do the exam and they often do the exams in special education with a teacher. She also modifies the materials so that the students with SLI have a little easier exam, different size font or paper, and if someone has a diagnosis, she will take it into consideration in grading. English teacher 3 explained that she has basic exercises and more challenging ones, for example, in word tests, and the students can choose which ones they do. She compiles different exams for the students with SLI; they might be in a colored paper which makes reading the text easier, the text might be enlarged, and she chooses exercises in which the student does not have to produce but to choose the correct answers. She said that her students usually do the exercises with a special needs assistant or a special education teacher because the adult can guide the student.

- 40) Yes, I make different exams, and they make them with a special needs assistant or special education teacher while I am supervising the other exam. Then the adult can give hints one exercise at a time. The exam can be on a colored paper, which highlights the text in a different way, or enlarged. The exercises are so that it is not necessary to produce but to recognize and to find the correspondent. (ET3)

English teacher 2 maintained that she gives more time, has a simpler version, and the student does the exam with a teacher or a special needs assistant. In addition, she might divide the exam into smaller units. She might leave out some exercise types and provide a wordlist that will help to complete an exercise. English teacher 4 clarified that she helps the student by providing a list of all of the words that the student is supposed fill out in the exercise. In reading comprehension exercises, she marks the line where the answer is found. These simple adjustments will help the student to complete the same exam as others.

- 41) About the exam arrangements: I give longer time to complete the exam and always simplified exam. Usually, or you could say always, they have an assistant with them. Either I do the exercise with them, or, for example, if there are four chapters for the exam the student completes one at a time. And I have noticed that we have had to lower the goals now that they are transitioning to middle school. I have left out some exercise types, I have provided words in English and a vocabulary that helps to understand the tasks. (ET2)

Special education teacher 2 also stated that they have longer exam times, and a quiet space where the students can do their exams. Furthermore, the students do their exams with her or a special needs assistant because then it is possible to help the student to understand each assignment. SET1 told that students with SLI normally do exams in special education because it is quieter there. She specified that she explains the student what should be done in each exercise. In her opinion, the most important factor seems to be that the student feels that he or she has someone there to support him or her.

- 42) Specifically supported exams, in other words, the children come here because there is less noise in here, and then we divide the exams into smaller units, we go the instructions through, and then they might have easier listening comprehension exercises, or the child can read the text as well, or has the key points in front of them. The structure of the exam is modified according to everyone's individual needs. But the most important factor seems to be that, the child feels that he or she has the support of the adult. (SET1)

SET3 explicated that the exam material of the book series they use has been compiled in such a manner that there are three alternative versions for each task. In her opinion, the easiest tasks are designed so that the student can guess the answers, which is problematic because then the student thinks that he or she does not have to practice. She added that the oral exams of the book series have revealed the students' language proficiency levels better than the written exams, and for that reason she hopes that they would have even more time to do them.

- 43) We have done the oral exams from this book series. I have not done them with this group yet, but the group I taught before did all the oral exams in the fourth grade because the group was small and we had the time to do them. The oral exams have revealed a lot more about the students' language proficiency than the written exams. I hope that we would have more time to do them. (SET3)

During the lessons students with SLI benefit from a clear structure and simple target language input. The participants of this study emphasized the importance of prioritizing and also differentiating the materials. They argued that it is not wise to focus too much energy on very complex grammar items if a student struggles with simple vocabulary. The teachers suggested letting students to choose what exercises they complete, or guiding them in choosing

appropriate exercises. What seems to be the most important factor for students with SLI in an exam, is the support from an adult. The teachers also explained that the students with SLI have more time to complete the exam, the exam might be on a colored paper or the font might be enlarged, which helps to distinguish the words more easily. Furthermore, the teachers suggested providing the students with a vocabulary because often it is difficult for students with SLI to recall words.

### **5.4.3 Multisensory learning**

It is emphasized in the NCC (2014) that the use of versatile working methods, such as experimental and functional approaches, which include games and drama that employ different senses and movement, will increase the students' engagement and self-direction. According to McGregor (2009), children with SLI often have a narrow vocabulary and benefit from any form of a play, a game or a story that motivates them to learn new words.

English teacher 4 felt that the students with SLI do well in games and drama because they enjoy being part of them, and the students speak English without focusing too much attention and pressure to it. ET4 opinionated that the combination of pictures and words has been very effective, and she has used picture-word combination tasks also in word tests. English teacher 3 had similar views; she also thought that different types of kinesthetic and functional learning methods, alongside pantomime, have proved to be very effective. She also highlighted an important factor – participation; it is important that a student with SLI can take part into the same tasks as the other students. Furthermore, she uses visual material. She also uses stories instead of mnemonics because, in her opinion, all students benefit from using them.

- 44) And if we talk about methods, visual material and then pantomime have proved to be very effective because you do not have to communicate verbally. And if the child gets excited, he or she can take part in the same tasks as the other children, which is very important. These sorts of kinesthetic, tactile and functional methods. (ET3)
- 45) Stories, for example the comparison of short adjectives, you have to invent a story, and that works for everyone. It is not memorizing a mnemonic but the students remember via the story what happens, and that sort of thing works well for everyone also for students with SLI. (ET3)

Special education teacher 3 emphasized the importance of interaction and interactive learning. She explained that they often repeat the answers of the more advanced students because then the students get a good feedback, and also the weaker students can see that it is possible for a child to learn to speak English. Moreover, as suggested by McGregor (2009) students with SLI benefit from repetition, and they need multiple exposures to new words and forms in order to learn them. Repeating peers' answers is a great method of increasing exposures to new language items.

- 46) We use interaction a lot and I insist that everyone participates by raising their hands but I also question everyone. I ask the students to repeat, and then I use the more advanced children as models. For example, if they can answer using whole sentences, we repeat their answers as well because they have good feedback and the other students realize that a child can learn also. (SET3)

Special education teacher 1 had discovered that a mirror is an important tool when learning languages. She explained that the kinetic sensation combined with the visual realization help the students to learn how to pronounce words in English. As suggested by Rapin (1996), children with SLI may often have difficulties with translating verbal images (word forms) into oral musculature commands.

- 47) What has been very important is to have a mirror in front of the child when we practice certain things. That kinetic sensation of pronunciation and seeing it, it goes from mouth to ear and ear to mouth. Many times we forget that we need impulses from different senses when we learn languages. When we memorize new things and learn new units, we use the same rehabilitating methods as we use with children who have difficulties with perceptual ability. (SET1)

A teacher can involve more than one sense at a time by adding movement to learning new language items. Although students with SLI benefit from multisensory learning that involves, among others, movement, it is important to remember that it is very difficult for a student with SLI to receive instructions orally and complete an assignment simultaneously. It is advisable to allow students time to understand the instructions and then require actions. Students with SLI have difficulties with holding and retrieving phonological information due to weaknesses in their phonological loop (Gillam, Montgomery and Gillam 2009). For this reason, linking a movement or a picture with a language item, will help students to recall the movement or the picture and consequently the word that was associated with it.

#### 5.4.4 Psychological factors

Lastly, psychological factors have a great impact on the students' wellbeing and adjustment to a classroom. Leonard (2014:29) speculates that a language deficit may lead to some social problems, such as withdrawal and low self-esteem, but may be that the social problems are co-occurring weaknesses instead of products of a language deficit. According to ICD-10, children with SLI often experience emotional and behavioral problems.

Baglieri and Shapiro (2011) remind that creating a comfortable and communal atmosphere in a classroom is very important, especially for students with a language impairment. A student must feel comfortable and safe before he or she can learn subject matters. English teacher 3 had addressed this issue by giving individual remedial teaching, which is, in her opinion, a great technique to build a relationship with the child. She added that a relationship with the student is very important in order to create a safe environment for the student to learn English.

- 48) It is useless to start teaching English, prepositions for example, if you do not have a relationship with the child first. Before we start to study, we try to find our common language. Remedial teaching sessions are a great way to build a relationship with the child because you are often alone with the child and can create a different atmosphere. (ET3)

Unclear expectations, rules and procedures in a classroom confuse the student; especially students with SLI have difficulties with following complex explanations and long stretches of speech. Particularly students with SLI benefit from having a clear structure visible to them and knowing the themes of each lesson. SET3 emphasized the importance of a student feeling comfortable and safe in an English class because only then it is possible to do one's best when the student has the courage to try. Special education teacher 1 thought that the clear structure in special education and in English class helps the student to concentrate on learning. Since the student does not have to struggle to understand what is happening in the classroom, the student does not have to worry about the social pressure of the situation.

- 49) It is comforting for the child when he or she comes to a place where there is a certain structure. I have certain places where the child can see what will be done next, and what is expected from him or her during the lesson. Then there is room for learning because the student does not have to focus on surviving in the social situation and appearing to know what is happening, although he or she has no clue. It is very important that the child feels that the structure is safe and comfortable and knows what to do. (SET1)



It is stated in the NCC (2014) that a teacher must provide students with versatile positive and realistic feedback in order to encourage the students. Also English teacher 1 suggested that it is very important to encourage and praise students with SLI, especially, in the classroom in front of peers. For children and youth friends are very important and their support and approval are vital. It is central to offer opportunities for success and encourage the students because as suggested by Leonard (2014) children with SLI often have a low self-esteem.

- 50) What is very important with these special needs students is encouragement; they often have a low self-esteem: "I don't know anything because I am so bad at this". When you can re-enforce their self-esteem by giving opportunities and saying "look how well you did this", and especially in front of other people, it has a great impact. -- (ET1)

A teacher should consider also the emotional needs of a student, and how to support them. As suggested by ET3 it is impossible for a student to learn anything if he or she does not feel comfortable in the classroom. SET1 shared this view; she also considered that there is room for learning only after one feels comfortable in a learning environment.

In sum, the teachers use methods that are not extra special nor impossible to carry out. They had realized that students with SLI benefit from a clear structure and clear instructions that enable students with SLI to focus their attention to relevant matters and to grasp the central message. A teacher should choose tasks that are in the students' zone of proximal development, which means that they are able to complete them with some help from the teacher, special needs assistant or peer. A teacher should also consider exam arrangements, and offer the student more time, necessary support and any other means that enable succeeding in a test.

## **6 DISCUSSION**

The aim of this study was to discover, how English teachers and special education teachers perceive teaching English to students with SLI. The research questions were; how English teachers and special education teachers perceive including students with SLI to mainstream English education, how special education teachers perceive teaching English in special education, how the teachers feel they are coping, how teachers characterize students with SLI, and what measures the teachers take to support students with SLI.

The data was collected with semi-structured interviews that were conducted in the spring of 2015. The participants were four English teachers and three special education teachers. The initial idea was to interview only English teachers but it proved to be very difficult to find an adequate number of English teachers with experience of teaching students with SLI, and it was decided to include special education teachers too. The data was analyzed using a data-based content analysis, which consists of three stages that are coding, categorizing and synthesizing the data (Galletta 2012, Miles, Huberman and Saldaña 2014, and Hirsjärvi and Hurme 2008). This inductive method was chosen because it allowed the researcher to analyze the data as it was without having to fit the results into pre-existing categories. The analysis process followed closely the guidelines provided by Miles, Huberman and Saldaña (2014), and it was evident that the choice of data-based content analysis was appropriate.

The results of the present thesis comply with the previous literature and studies about SLI and children with SLI. It can be seen that the studies conducted in English speaking countries can be extended to a Finnish context. Furthermore, the results of this study substantiate the popular view that there is a lack of education about teaching students with special needs in the subject teacher training. Moreover, the hypothesis that teachers would feel that they were able to cope despite the challenges they face with students with SLI, proved to be accurate. Hence, this study substantiates popular views about the shortcomings of teacher training and teachers' coping with special-needs students.

The results show that the teachers were cautiously optimistic towards inclusion and stated that inclusion does not suit all, but SLI is not a reason for exclusion either. The special education teachers emphasized the fact that the placement group and the student's mindset must be appropriate before trying inclusion. As suspected the teachers had anticipations towards inclusion because schools are not completely inclusive yet, and teachers have a limited amount of experience of successful inclusion. The special education teachers thought that special education is a privilege and an opportunity to learn with peers. They also stated that the clear structure in special education suit students with SLI well. Although I do not want to argue against the benefits of special education today, it is advisable to look into future and consider how the school culture, organization, and views about students with special needs could be changed so that more students could be integrated into mainstream education. The new Core Curriculum (2014) changes the school culture dramatically and emphasizes the benefits of cooperative teaching which could increase inclusion. In my opinion, it is valuable

for the students with special needs to be in interaction with their same-aged peers and to be part of the school community.

Regardless of their apprehensions and concerns, the teachers felt that they were coping quite well. The majority of the teachers (6 out of 7) thought that they would like to have more training on SLI, and also six teachers felt that they had not received enough training during their teacher training. The significance of in-service training was highlighted, and especially the fact that the teachers had had to search for the training themselves. The teachers had received varied amounts of in-service training, and only one of the teachers thought that she would not be interested in more training about SLI. The teachers emphasized that also the schools had made arrangements that made it possible for the teachers to cope with students with SLI; smaller group sizes, the possibility to have a special needs assistant and cooperative teaching, and access to special education resource permitted their coping. The participants of this study had realized a lack of training about SLI and had searched for training themselves. One English teacher had realized some amount of studies in special education, two English teachers had completed the basic studies in special education, and one English teacher had a special education teacher qualification. Also, the special education teachers had had to find more information about SLI in in-service training. The English teachers thought overall that there was training available but for some the cost was too high, or they felt that special education teachers were given precedence.

The teachers identified a few strengths of students with SLI that are the visual talent and their good behavior and perseverance. However, the teachers named a much greater number of weakness, among them are, difficulties with memory and conceptualization, difficulties with language expression and language reception, psychological factors and social issues. In the teachers' opinion, these weaknesses had a great impact on the way the students learn English, and how the teachers must speak and teach. It is clear based on the literature about SLI and the results of the present thesis that SLI is an interesting narrow learning disability that manifests as difficulties with language expression or comprehension, or both. Although SLI is a narrow learning disability, it has ripple effects to other areas of learning, which has to be taken into consideration when planning the teaching and interaction with a student with SLI.

The differentiation methods the teachers use were versatile, but many of them mentioned very similar methods; fewer transitions, clear structure, a schedule of the lesson visible to students,

tasks in different proficiency and abstraction levels, supported exams, and more time to complete tasks and exams. None of these methods are impossible to organize nor will they disturb other students in the classroom. What was highlighted, was that a teacher must focus more attention to one's speech tempo and clarity of instructions, and must have an eye-contact with the students. It cannot be emphasized enough that, as Dufva, Vaarala and Pitkänen (2007) explain, the means of differentiation are not extraordinary or special, but they must be used more systematically and intensively with students with SLI.

The significance of the present study is the knowledge that teachers are coping although they face struggles in their day-to-day work. The teachers reported that they have apprehensions and concerns, but they were able to cope owing to the in-service training about SLI, and also the arrangements provided by the school had enabled their success. The extensive list of the differentiation methods, which were used by the participants of this study, can help all teachers to modify their teaching to fit different learners. Moreover, Finnish teachers can notice that it is possible to cope with students with special needs, and their teaching does not require extraordinary means or qualities from the teacher.

Despite the initial difficulties in finding participants, the participants of this study form a representative pool: they had different educational backgrounds and varied amounts of teaching experience, and they work in various cities. The comparison between English teachers' and special education teachers' experiences offers an interesting viewpoint. All of the interviewees were women, and for that reason the male teachers' perceptions cannot be evaluated. However, there should be no difference between the perceptions of male and female teachers based on their training. In my opinion, the individual perceptions and experiences have a greater effect on the results than the participants' gender. In addition, the novice teachers' perceptions cannot be assessed based on the results of this study because the participants of this study had five to more than twenty years of teaching experience. The findings of the present study suggest the importance of in-service training, and it can be speculated that novice teachers would struggle more because they have not had the possibilities for further training, yet.

Due to the limited number of interviewees, the results cannot be generalized to cover the whole of Finland, but it is evident from the data that teachers from different cities and regions have similar experiences and concerns which might suggest a trend. The results suggest that

there is a need for more inclusive teacher training. Already in teacher training more focus should be placed on teaching future teachers how to cater for the needs of different kind of learners and students with special needs. The results imply a need for more training about learning impairments, and SLI in particular. It might be advisable to have more practical training periods in teaching groups where there are students with special needs. The majority of the teachers had had to seek for training by themselves in open universities or in other in-service training, which reveals that there is a lack of information about this topic in teacher training. In-service training should be made available to all teachers, and the cost should not be an obstacle to increase knowledge about learning difficulties. Based on personal experiences, the amount of training about learning impairments has not increased in the subject teacher training since the time the participants of the study had studied.

Further research would be needed to discover any regional differences, differences between sexes, and differences between novice and experienced teachers' experiences. In addition, further research on this topic could be made after the new National Core Curriculum (2014) has been in effect for a few years because then it would be possible to discover how the inclusive practices of the new curriculum have been adapted. This field of research is interesting and worth of investigating because SLI affects approximately 7 per cent of children, which makes SLI as common as ADHD and dyslexia, and there is a lack of Finnish research on this topic.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Ainscow, M., Booth T. and Dyson, A. (2006). *Improving schools, developing inclusion*. New York, London: Routledge.
- Amendments to the National Core Curriculum for basic education 2010. Finnish Board of Education. [http://oph.fi/download/132551\\_amendments\\_and\\_additions\\_to\\_national\\_core\\_curriculum\\_basic\\_education.pdf](http://oph.fi/download/132551_amendments_and_additions_to_national_core_curriculum_basic_education.pdf). (4th January 2015)
- Baglieri, S., and Shapiro, A. (2011). *Disability studies and the inclusive classroom: critical practices for creating least restrictive attitudes*. New York: Routledge.
- Bandura, A. (1997). *Self-efficacy: the exercise of control*. New York: Freeman.
- Brackenreed, D. (2008) Inclusive Education: Identifying Teachers' Perceived Stressors in Inclusive Classrooms. *Exceptionality Education International*, 18, 131-147. <http://ir.lib.uwo.ca/eei/vol18/iss3/5> (27th January 2015)
- CEFR: Common European framework of reference. [http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/linguistic/Source/Framework\\_EN.pdf](http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/linguistic/Source/Framework_EN.pdf) (18th March 2015)
- Conti-Ramsden, G., Crutchley, A. and Botting, N. (1997). The extent to which psychometric tests differentiate subgroups of children with SLI. *Journal of Speech, Language & Hearing Research*, 40(4), 765-777. <http://search.ebscohost.com.ezproxy.jyu.fi/login.aspx?direct=true&db=afh&AN=9710010590&site=ehost-live>. (23rd February 2015)
- Conti-Ramsden, G. & Botting, N. (1999) Classification of children with specific language impairment: longitudinal considerations, *Journal of Speech, Language and Hearing Research*, 42 (5), 1195–1204. <http://search.ebscohost.com.ezproxy.jyu.fi/login.aspx?direct=true&db=afh&AN=2353718&site=ehost-live>. (3rd March 2015)
- Convention on the Rights of the Child 1991. United Nations. <https://www.icrc.org/ihl/INTRO/540?OpenDocument> (3rd January 2015)
- Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2007. United Nations. <http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/enable/rights/convtexte.htm#convtext> (3rd January 2015)
- Deevy, P. (2009). Language Comprehension Approaches to Child Language Disorders. In Schwartz, R.G. (ed.) *Handbook of Child Language Disorders*. New York and Hove: Psychology Press, 488-512.
- Dockrell, J. and Lindsay, G. (2001). Children with Specific Speech and Language Difficulties—the teachers' perspective. *Oxford Review of Education*, 27 (3), 369-394, DOI: 10.1080/03054980120067410
- Dufva, M., Vaarala, H. and Pitkänen, K. (2007). Vieraat kielet ja monikielisyys. In Aro, T., Siiskonen T. & Ahonen, T. (eds.) *Ymmärsinkö oikein? Kielelliset vaikeudet nuoruusiässä*. Jyväskylä: PS-kustannus, 156-192.
- Ervast, L. and Leppänen, P. (2010a). Kielellinen erityisvaikeus. In Korpilahti, P., Aaltonen, O. and Laine, M. (eds.) *Kieli ja aivot. Kommunikaation perusteet, häiriöt ja kuntoutus*. Turun yliopisto: Kognitiivisen neurotieteen tutkimuskeskus, 212-221.
- Ervast, L. and Leppänen, P. (2010b). Kielellisten erityisvaikeuksien kuntoutus ja harjoitteluvaikutusten neurokognitiivinen arviointi. In Korpilahti, P., Aaltonen, O. and Laine, M. (eds.) *Kieli ja aivot. Kommunikaation perusteet, häiriöt ja kuntoutus*. Turun yliopisto: Kognitiivisen neurotieteen tutkimuskeskus, 301-308.
- Fletcher, P. (2009). Syntax in Child Language Disorders. In Schwartz, R.G. (ed.) *Handbook of Child Language Disorders*. New York and Hove: Psychology Press, 388-405.

- Forlin, C. (2012). Future directions - What is needed now for effective inclusive teacher education. In Forlin, C. (Ed.). *Future Directions for Teacher Education for Inclusion*. London: Routledge. Pp. 173-182.
- Galletta, A. (2012). *Mastering the Semi-structured Interview and Beyond : From Research Design to Analysis and Publication*. New York: New York University Press. [http://web.a.ebscohost.com.ezproxy.jyu.fi/ehost/ebookviewer/ebook/bmxlYmtfXzU3NTU2M19fQU41?sid=9e983761-c7a3-426d-a897-a3a7bf3a62f1@sessionmgr4003&vid=0&format=EB&lpid=lp\\_73&rid=0](http://web.a.ebscohost.com.ezproxy.jyu.fi/ehost/ebookviewer/ebook/bmxlYmtfXzU3NTU2M19fQU41?sid=9e983761-c7a3-426d-a897-a3a7bf3a62f1@sessionmgr4003&vid=0&format=EB&lpid=lp_73&rid=0)
- Gauger, L., Lombardino, L. and Leonard, C. (1997). Brain morphology in children with specific language impairment. *Journal of Speech, Language and Hearing research*. 40 (6), 1272-1284. <http://web.a.ebscohost.com.ezproxy.jyu.fi/ehost/detail/detail?vid=3&sid=6f34c3ab-d1b5-496b-8fc10f6517ed53b5%40sessionmgr4001&hid=4204&bdata=JnNpdGU9ZWhvc3QtG12ZQ%3d%3d#db=afh&AN=11795> (30th January 2015)
- Gillam, R.B., Montgomery, J.W. and Gillam, S.L. (2009). Attention and memory in Child Language disorders. In Schwartz, R.G. (ed.) *Handbook of Child Language Disorders*. New York and Hove: Psychology Press, 201-215.
- Herbert, M., Ziegler, D., Deutsch, C., O'Brien, L., Kennedy, D., Filipek, P., Bakardjiev, A., Hodgson, J., Takeoka, M., Makris, N. and Caviness, V. (2005). Brain asymmetries in autism and developmental language disorder: a nested whole-brain analysis. *Brain*. 128 (1), 213-226. DOI: 10.1093/brain/awh330 (30th January 2015)
- Hirsjärvi, S. (2009a). Tutkimustyytit ja aineistonkeruun perusmenetelmät. In Hirsjärvi, S., Remes, P. & Sajavaara, P. *Tutki ja kirjoita*. Helsinki: Tammi. 191-220.
- Hirsjärvi, S. and Hurme, H. (2008). *Tutkimushaastattelun teoria ja käytäntö*. Helsinki: Gaudeamus Helsinki University Press.
- Hook, P. E. and Haynes, C. W. (2009). Reading and Writing in Child Language Disorders. In Schwartz, R.G. (ed.). *Handbook of Child Language Disorders*. New York and Hove: Psychology Press, 424-444.
- International Statistical Classification of Diseases and Related Health Problems 10th Revision (ICD-10)-2015-WHO Version for 2015. World Health Organization. <http://apps.who.int/classifications/icd10/browse/2015/en#/F80-F89>. (21st January 2015.)
- Kumpulainen, T. and Leinonen, R. (2001). *Opettajien kokemuksia dysfaattisen lapsen kohtaamisesta*. University of Jyväskylä. Faculty of education. Master's thesis. <http://urn.fi/URN:NBN:fi:jyu-2001876200> (30th January 2015)
- Kunnari, A., Savinainen-Makkonen, T., Leonard, L.B., Mäkinen, L., Tolonen, A-K., Luotonen, M. and Leinonen, E. (2011). Children with Specific Language Impairment in Finnish: the use of tense and agreement inflections. *Journal of Child Language*, 38 (5), 999-1027 doi:10.1017/S0305000910000528
- Leonard, L. B. (2014) (2<sup>nd</sup> edition). *Children with specific language impairment*. Cambridge, Massachusetts, London: The MIT Press
- Leonard, L. B. (2009). Language symptoms and their possible sources in specific language impairment. In E. Bavin (ed.), *The Cambridge Handbook of Child Language*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 433-446.
- Malinen and Savolainen (2012). The directions of Finnish teacher education in the era of the revised Act on Basic education. In Forlin, C. (Ed.). *Future Directions for Teacher Education for Inclusion*. London: Routledge. Pp. 52-60.
- Malinen, O-P., Savolainen, H., Engelbrecht, P., Xu, J., Nel, M., Nel, N. and Tlale, D. (2013). Exploring teacher self-efficacy for inclusive practices in three diverse countries.

- Teaching and Teacher Education*. 33, 34-44. doi:10.1016/j.tate.2013.02.004. (27th February 2015)
- McGregor, K. K. (2009). Semantics in Child Language Disorders. In Schwartz, R.G. (ed.) *Handbook of Child Language Disorders*. New York and Hove: Psychology Press, 365-387.
- Miles, M.B., Huberman, A.M. and Saldaña, J. (2014) (3<sup>rd</sup> edition). *Qualitative Data Analysis. A Method Sourcebook*. Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications.
- Oetting, J. B. and Hadley, P. A. (2009). Morphosyntax in Child Language Disorders. In Schwartz, R.G. (ed.) *Handbook of Child Language Disorders*. New York and Hove: Psychology Press, 341-364.
- Rapin, I. (1996). Practitioner Review: Developmental Language Disorders: A clinical Update. *The Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry and Allied Disciplines*, 37 (6), 643-655.
- Schwartz, R.G. (2009). Specific language impairment. In Schwartz, R.G. (ed.) *Handbook of Child Language Disorders*. New York and Hove: Psychology Press, 3-43.
- Seiger-Gardner, L. (2009). Language Production Approaches to Child Language Disorders. In Schwartz, R.G. (ed.) *Handbook of Child Language Disorders*. New York and Hove: Psychology Press, 465-487
- The National Core Curriculum for basic education 2004. Finnish Board of Education. [http://oph.fi/english/curricula\\_and\\_qualifications/basic\\_education](http://oph.fi/english/curricula_and_qualifications/basic_education). (4th January 2015.)
- The National Core Curriculum for basic education 2014. Finnish Board of Education. [http://www.oph.fi/download/163777\\_perusopetuksen\\_opetussuunnitelman\\_perusteet\\_2014.pdf](http://www.oph.fi/download/163777_perusopetuksen_opetussuunnitelman_perusteet_2014.pdf) (19th January 2015)
- Tomblin, J. B. (2009). Children with specific language impairment. In E. Bavin (ed.), *The Cambridge Handbook of Child Language*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 417-431.
- Tomblin, J., Zhang, X., Buckwalter, P. and O'Brien, M. (2003). The Stability of Primary Language Disorders: Four Years After Kindergarten Diagnosis. *Journal of Speech, Language & Hearing Research*. 2003 (46) 6, 1283-1296. DOI: 10.1044/1092-4388(2003/100). (28th January 2015)
- Trauner, D., Wulfeck, B., Tallal, P. and Hesselink, J. (2000). Neurological and MRI profiles of children with developmental language impairment. *Developmental Medicine and Child Neurology*. 42 (7), 470-475. DOI: 10.1111/j.1469-8749.2000.tb00350.x (22nd February, 2015)
- Tropper, B. and Schwartz, R.G. (2009). Neurobiology of Child language Disorders. In R. Schwartz (ed.), *Handbook of Child Language Disorders*. New York; Hove: Psychology Press, 174-200.
- Tuomi J. and Sarajärvi, A. (2009). *Laadullinen tutkimus ja sisällönanalyysi*. Helsinki: Tammi.
- Tuovinen, S., Ahonen, T. and Westerholm, J. (2007). *Sananlöytämistesti*. Jyväskylä: Niilo Mäki Institute and Haukkarannan koulu -school.
- Universal Declaration of Human Rights 1948. United Nations. [http://www.ohchr.org/EN/UDHR/Documents/UDHR\\_Translations/eng.pdf](http://www.ohchr.org/EN/UDHR/Documents/UDHR_Translations/eng.pdf) (3<sup>rd</sup> January 2015)



## APPENDIX 1: Questions for English teachers

### MIETI ENGLANNIN TUNTEJA.

- 1) Taustatieto/ Background information
  - a) Kuinka kauan olet ollut opettajana? / How long have you been a teacher?
  - b) Kuinka paljon olet ollut tekemisissä ihmisten kanssa, joilla on kielivaikeus tai muu oppimisvaikeus? / How much of experience do you have with people with SLI or other learning disability?
  - c) Kuinka paljon sinulla on opetuskokemusta oppilaista, joilla on kielivaikeus tai muu oppimisvaikeus? / How much of teaching experience do you have with students with SLI or other learning disability?
- 2) Ovatko opetusryhmäsi hyvin heterogeenisiä? Mainitse pari syytä! / Are the student groups very heterogeneous?
- 3) Kuinka kuvailisit oppilasta, jolla on erityinen kielivaikeus (SLI) lyhyesti? Voit miettiä paria tapausta. / How would you describe a student with SLI?
- 4) Oletko saanut koulutusta SLI oppilaiden opettamiseen opettajankoulutuksessa tai täydennyskoulutuksena? Jos kyllä, millaista ja kuinka paljon (tunteina)? / Have you received training on teaching students with SLI in teacher training or in in-service training?
  - a) Tuntuuko sinusta sille, että olet saanut riittävästi koulutusta? / Do you feel that you have received enough training?
  - b) Haluaisitko lisää tietoa ja koulutusta? Jos kyllä, millaista ja mistä aiheesta? / Would you like to have more training?
- 5) Kuinka koet sen, että oppilaat, joilla on erityinen kielivaikeus integroidaan yleisopetusryhmään? / How do you feel about integrating students with SLI into mainstream education?
- 6) Kuinka koet sen, että englannin ryhmässäsi on oppilas/oppilaita, joilla on SLI? Voisiko tilannetta parantaa? Mainitse pari tapaa! / How do you perceive having a student with SLI in your English class? Could the situation be improved?
- 7) Saatko tietää oppilaan erityisvaikeudesta (SLI tai muu) ennen hänen tuleamista oppilaaksesi? Vai oletko havainnut vaikeudet vasta itse? / Do you know the student's special needs before he or she becomes your student, or have you found the difficulties yourself?
- 8) Mitkä ovat mielestäsi SLI oppilaan vahvuudet ja heikkoudet? / What are the strengths and weaknesses of a student with SLI?
- 9) Miten oppilaan SLI vaikuttaa tuntien kulkuun? / How does the student's SLI affect the classes?
  - a) Joudutko tekemään jotakin erilailta? Anna pari esimerkkiä! / Do you do something differently?
- 10) Opetatko ryhmää yksin? Vai onko luokassasi avustaja (aina/toisinaan)? / Do you teach the group alone or do you have an assistant?

- a) Opiskeleeko SLI oppilas osan viikkotunneista muussa ryhmässä (pienryhmä tai erityisryhmä)? / Does the student study some of the lessons in a smaller group or in special education?
- 11) Oletko kokenut jonkin tietyn/jotkin tietyt tavat opettaa SLI oppilasta erityisen tehokkaiksi tai toimiviksi? Oletko laajentanut sen tavan käyttöä muihin ryhmiin? / Are there methods of teaching that you have found to be very effective?
- 12) Käytätkö erityisiä opetusjärjestelyitä ja/tai koejärjestelyitä SLI oppilaiden kanssa? / Do you use special exam arrangements with students with SLI?
- 13) Vapaa sana: Haluatko lisätä jotain? / Would you like to add something?

## **APPENDIX 2: Questions for special education teachers**

### MIETI ENGLANNIN TUNTEJA.

- 1) Taustatieto/ Background information
- a) Kuinka kauan olet ollut opettajana?/ How long have you been a teacher?
- b) Kuinka paljon olet ollut tekemisissä ihmisten kanssa, joilla on kielivaikeus tai muu oppimisvaikeus? / How much of experience do you have with people with SLI or other learning disability?
- c) Kuinka paljon sinulla on opetuskokemusta oppilaista, joilla on kielivaikeus tai muu oppimisvaikeus? / How much of teaching experience do you have with students with SLI or other learning disability?
- 2) Ovatko opetusryhmäsi hyvin heterogeenisiä? Mainitse pari syytä! / Are the student groups very heterogeneous?
- 3) Kuinka kuvailisit oppilasta, jolla on erityinen kielivaikeus (SLI) lyhyesti? Voit miettiä paria tapausta. / How would you describe a student with SLI?
- 4) Oletko saanut koulutusta SLI oppilaiden opettamiseen opettajankoulutuksessa tai täydennyskoulutuksena? Jos kyllä, millaista ja kuinka paljon (tunteina)? / Have you received training on teaching students with SLI in teacher training or in in-service training?
- a) Tuntuuko sinusta sille, että olet saanut riittävästi koulutusta? / Do you feel that you have received enough training?
- b) Haluaisitko lisää tietoa ja koulutusta? Jos kyllä, millaista ja mistä aiheesta? / Would you like to have more training?
- 5) Voisiko oppilaat, joilla on erityinen kielivaikeus integroida perusopetusryhmään? / Could students with SLI be integrated into mainstream education?
- 6) Kuinka koet sen, että SLI oppilaat ovat erityisopetuksessa englannin kielessä? / How do you perceive teaching English to students with SLI in special education?
- 7) Millaisena koet SLI oppilaan opettamisen? Voisiko tilannetta parantaa? Mainitse pari tapaa! / How do you perceive teaching a student with SLI? Could the situation be improved?
- 8) Oletan, että saat tietää oppilaan erityisvaikeudesta (SLI tai muu) ennen hänen tulemistä oppilaaksesi? Vai onko vaikeudelle löydetty nimi vasta myöhemmin? / I assume that you

know about the students' special needs when they become your student, or have you discovered special needs later?

- 14) Mitkä ovat mielestäsi SLI oppilaan vahvuudet ja heikkoudet? / What are the strengths and weaknesses of a student with SLI?
- 15) Miten oppilaan SLI vaikuttaa tuntien kulkuun? / How does the student's SLI affect the lessons?
  - a) Teetkö jotain erilailla SLI oppilaan kanssa kuin muiden ryhmien? Anna pari esimerkkiä! / Do you do something differently than with other groups?
- 16) Opetatko ryhmää yksin? Vai onko luokassasi avustaja (aina/toisinaan)? / Do you teach the group alone or do you have an assistant?
  - a) Opiskeleeko SLI oppilas osan viikkotunneista muussa ryhmässä? / Does the student study in other groups besides in a special education group?
- 17) Oletko kokenut jonkin tietyn/jotkin tietyt tavat opettaa SLI oppilasta erityisen tehokkaiksi tai toimiviksi? Oletko laajentanut sen tavan käyttöä muihin ryhmiin? / Are there methods of teaching that you have found to be very effective?
- 18) Käytätkö erityisiä opetusjärjestelyitä ja/tai koejärjestelyitä SLI oppilaiden kanssa, joita et käytä muilla? / Do you use special exam arrangements with students with SLI?
- 9) Vapaa sana: Haluatko lisätä jotain? / Would you like to add something?

**APPENDIX 3: Analysis process.**

<b>Theme</b>	<b>Synthesized results</b>	<b>Working categories</b>	<b>Initial codes</b>
Attitudes towards inclusion	apprehensive	Works for some, does not work for some	Depends on the child, works for some, it is ok, three-tier system works well
	pro	Works well	
Attitudes towards segregation	Privilege	Positive discrimination	Peer group, more time per student, safety
Competence	Feeling competent	Good amount of information about SLI	Very little or no information about SLI, Information about SLI
	Would like more training	Limited information about SLI	
Coping	I can cope quite well	There are challenges, but I can manage	Requires a bit more work, challenging but no different, I am quite happy with the current situation
Strengths of SLI student	Good student	Good student	Good student, quiet, hard-working, visually talented, good at compensating, innovative
	Innovative	Good at compensating, visually talented	
Weaknesses of SLI student	Receptive	Difficulty with reading, difficulty with receiving instructions	Weak working memory, weak memory, abstract matters difficult, difficulties with deduction, slow, conceptualization ↓, passive, writing difficulties, imperfect syntax, praxis, difficulty in finding words, social issues, reading, grammar, living question marks, weak in many subjects
	Expressive	Difficulty with speech, difficulties with writing	
	Central executive	Weak memory and conceptualizing skills, passivity, weak in other school subjects	
	Social life	Problems in relationships	
Teaching arrangements	Revision	Revision	Revising, more remedial teaching, comprehension checks, prioritizing, planning, structure, one format, priming, easy version, assistance, pictures, stories, games, tactile, signs, security, oral exams, different materials, less transitions, peers!
	Preparation	Structure, planning in advance, priming	
	Differentiation	Differentiated materials, assistance, prioritizing	
	Multisensory learning	Functional learning, visual aids	
	Psychological factors	Security, peers	

## APPENDIX 4: Excerpts in original Finnish

- 1) Tää on tää ihana inkluusio mikä meillä on. Se sopii toisille oppilaille paremmin kuin toisille oppilaille. Että tää on semmoinen, mistä on vaikea sanoa mustavalkoista vastausta. On oppilaita, jotka ihan ehdottomasti [voi integroida], ei se oppimisvaikeus ole semmoinen, että ihmiset pitäis eristää jonnekin – päinvastoin. Sitten pitää vaan miettiä opetusmenetelmiä mukauttaa semmoiseksi, - - (ET1)
- 2) Me ollaan tän uuden kolmiportaisen järjestelmän mukana tietenkin, mikä tarkoittaa sitä, että onneksi kaikki lapset osallistuu englannin yleisopetukseen, että äärimmäisen harvoin [ollaan erityisopetuksessa] ja äärimmäisen harvoin se syy on kielivaikeudet - - - - Mä oon ehdottomasti sitä mieltä, että ehdottomasti, koska kaikkein paras tilanne on se, että lapsi on automaattisesti yleisopetuksen ryhmässä ja siellä on mukana joko ohjaaja tai erityisopettaja, ja sitten jos on vaikeita jaksoja niin mene sitten vaikka jaksolle, että tekee vaikka jakson erkaopen kanssa tai pienryhmässä. (ET3)
- 3) Se riippuu ihan hirveesti lapsesta, että on lapsia, joilla on... ja riippuu tietysti hirveästi siitä ryhmästä, joihin niitä lapsia ollaan integroimassa. Erityisesti esimerkiksi se psyyke on semmoinen puoli, että jos se on kestävä ja lapsi on realistisesti sen oman oppimisen kanssa ja tietää sen oman haasteensa ja pystyy silti sillä omalla tasollansa työskentelemään, niin mun mielestä semmoset kannattaa ilman muuta lähteä kokeilemaan. (SET3)
- 4) Ajattelin, että esimerkiksi yleisopetuksen kouluissa, jos siellä tiedetään, että on näitä lapsia niin kannattaisi koota ainakin joillakin oppitunneilla oppimaan yhdessä. Siksikin ettei heille synny käsitystä siitä, että he ovat huonoja tai tyhmiä. Vaan semmoinen käsitys siitä, että on tällainen oikeesti neurologinen pulma, joka heidän oppimiseensa vaikuttaa. Ja mä aattelen, että se tieto on sen psyyken rakentumisen kannalta erittäin merkityksellinen. Mä en pidä tätä tällaisena negatiivisena segregaatina, vaan aattelin ennemminkin, että tää on näitten lasten, joilla on isot pulmat tällä alalla oikeus, lupa olla hyviä sellaisina kuin he ovat. (SET3)
- 5) No tuota, tavallaan siinä on se hyvä puoli, että mä pystyn käyttämään enemmän aikaa yhtä oppilasta kohden, ja jos ajattelee, että puhutaan oikein vaikeista, isoista ongelmista kielellisellä puolella niin onhan se hirvittävän kiusallista oppilaalle olla isossa, vieraassa ryhmässä missä kaikki asiat menee ihan niin yli. (SET2)
- 6) Hyvin vähän. Nyt varsin tuntuu, että kaikki mahdollinen koulutus – erityisopettajat pääsee vaan. Ja sitten sillon kun mä tein opinnot, siitä ei kuitenkaan niin pitkä aika ole, niin aika vähän oli sitä. (ET2)
- 7) Mä oon varmaan tehny semmosia valintoja sillon, että mä oon sen tyyppisiä kurseja valinnut. -- Mä oon tehny sen tyyppisiä harjoitteluita, että oon saanut sitä kautta paljon vahvistusta, ja ne on ollu mun mielestä, niin kun harjoittelut yleensä, mun mielestä semmosta opintojen parasta antia, että sieltä on niiltä opettajilta, kenen kanssa on tehnyt töitä siellä harjoittelussa, niin on oppinut tästä arkityöstä kaikista eniten. (SET3)
- 8) Joo oon ite hakeutunut tuolla avoimessa yliopistossa. - - No onhan sitä tarjolla, jos ite etsii. Eli se syy on varmaan itsessä, jos ei oo saanut. (ET4)
- 9) No kyllä, jos suuntaus on tämä opetuksessa, niin kyllä mä haluaisin, että sitä tarjottaisiin ja annettaisiin mahdollisuus, että sitä aika sokkona lähtee sitä opetusta miettimään. -- Voisi olla tärkeää monelle opettajalle tietää ihan teoriaa tieteellistäkin, että mitä se edes tarkoittaa. Että totta kai sitten käytännönkeinoja tai vaikka tällaista työpajatyypistä, että mistä on kysymys ja miten se näkyy siinä, miten he oppivat. (ET2)

- 10) Joo, pääasiassa täydennyskoulutuksena. Aika vähän sitä oli myöskään siellä erityisopettajan opinnoissa. - - No ei varmaan se lisä pahitteeksi oo, mutta aika paljon olen henkilökohtaisesti hankkinut sitä täydennyskoulutuksena sitä koulutusta, että sinänsä se ei tunnu vieraalta se osaluue. (SET1)
- 11) -- sillä tavalla ajattelisin, että aika hyvin oon saanut koulutusta. Mutta on semmosiakin tilanteita et sitten, jos se tavallaan se kombinaatio, mikä sillä lapsella on niiden diagnoosien tai erityisvaikeuksien osalta on niin jotenkin monenkirjava, niin sitten tulee semmonen olo, että keltä tästä voi kysyä ja tietääkö tästä kukaan mitään. - - Että jos ne pulmat kietoutuu syvemmin sen lapsen psyykkiseen hyvinvoinnin tai pahoinvoinnin ympärille, ja se miten se vaikuttaa siihen kieleen niin se on semmonen aihealue, josta ei ole kauheasti koulutusta. Mä en ole ehkä kauheasti osannut ettiäkään. Mä oon nyt vasta ite sitä problematiikka miettinyt, mutta se on semmonen mistä mä toivoisin saavani lisää tietoa, koska se näyttää olevan semmonen aika merkittävä. (SET3)
- 12) No tuota meidän koulussa on ihana tilanne siinä, että meillä on myöskin erityisopetusresursseja käytettävissä, että oon myöskin saanut samanaikaisopettajan luokkaan joissain tapauksissa, kun on ollut semmoinen, että omat resurssit ei riitä niin moneen, että on ollut useampi erilainen vaikeus samassa ryhmässä. Niin sitten on ollut hirveen hienoo, että on pystynyt saamaan tukea erityisopetuksesta ja ainakin osa-aikaisesti että se on auttanut ainakin kyllä. Mutta tuota emmä koe sitä sillä tavalla, kyllähän se työtä teettää mutta. ET1
- 13) Joo kyllä inklusio, että erityisopetusta on tarjolla, mutta hyvin vähän englannin kieleen, että enkussa tuntuu, että pitää pärjätä aika lailla omillaan. - - Kieltämättä nyt kun tätä miettii, niin itse asiassa meillä on aika hyvin asiat, vaikei aina tunnu. Jakotunnit on järjestetty ja ryhmäkoko niillä, joilla on ihan diagnoosi tehty ja oppimissuunnitelmia, niin toinen tunti meillä on jakotuntina ja ohjaaja on lähes aina sillä toisella tunnilla. (ET2)
- 14) Onhan se haasteellista, mutta sinänsä ne keinot, jota sä käytät kielihäiriöisten lasten kanssa ei oo pois niiltä, jotka on hyvin pärjääviä ja menestyviä niissä kielissä. Niin sinänsä ne ei oo toisiaan poissulkevia, vaan päinvastoin niistä on hyöty myös niille, jotka hyvin pärjää. - - Sinänsä ne ei poikkea paitsi silloin täytyy oikeasti kiinnittää huomiota siihen omaan opettajuuteen enemmän huomiota: millä tavalla puhun, mikä on mun puhetemponi, ja puhun lapseen päin, minulla on lapseen suora kontakti ja hän näkee minut, ja ne asiat visualisoidaan, mutta sitä samaa tehdään myös muiden lasten kanssa, vaikei olisikaan kielellisestä erityisvaikeudesta kyse. (ET1)
- 15) Ehkä mä ajattelisin, että tää ei oo opettamista kummempaa: suurempi kirjo enkun opettajalla on siellä yleisopetuksen ryhmässä. Meillä on kuitenkin selvästi tiedossa tää lasten pulma ja me myöskin tiedetään useimmiten ne väylät; että kenelle sopii visuaalinen opetus, ja jos on hahmottamisen pulmaa niin minkä tyyppistä se on, mutta yleisopetuksen ryhmässä kun sä et millään voi kaikkia lapsia tällä tarkkuudella tuntea, niin sä joudut paljon enemmän arpapelillä tai semmosta keskitietä ottamatta huomioon kenenkään erityisyyksiä ottamatta huomioon menemään eteenpäin. (SET3)
- 16) Tällä yhdellä on ainakin se, että se on niin kauhean kiltti. Hän tekee mitä pyydetään, ja kyllä mun kokemuksessa monet näistä on ahkeria. Kyllä mun mielestä, jos se motivaatio riittää niin sillä ahkeruudella voidaan korvata tosi, tosi paljon. (ET4)
- 17) -- oppimisvaikeus ei ole este, vaan se on erilainen ajattelutapa, ja erilainen havainnointitapa tästä maailmasta. [Se] voi olla uutta luova, ja kun täytyy ajatella ja käyttää eri kanavia, kun tietyllä tavalla se meidän normiporukka käyttää. Niin se monesti innovoi, jos sille lapsella annetaan mahdollisuus, niin se innovoi toisenlaisen tavan ajatella ja toteuttaa ja löytää menetelmiä. Se ei ole välttämättä aina se este sille oppimiselle. (SET1)
- 18) No visuaalinen oppimiskyky on pääsääntöisesti näillä lapsilla hirveen vahva, ja semmonen visuaalinen muisti on monella myöskin hirveen vahva ja se on semmonen mikä englannissakin

auttaa aluksi aika paljon. Lapset on taitavia löytämään esimerkiksi tuttuja sanoja ja oppimaan sitä kautta. (SET3)

- 19) Yleensä se, miten ne ilmenee tässä luokkatilanteessa on hitautena, ja sitten lähimuistin ja työmuistin vaikeutena (ET1)
- 20) Aika monella muisti on semmonen haastava. Joku juttu näyttää menevän jollakin tunnilla kauheen hyvin kaikille jakeluun, ja kun me palataan, esimerkiksi tänä vuonna meillä on englannin tunnit tiistaina ja perjantaina, voi olla, että perjantaina ei oo mitään mielessä siitä tiistain tunnista. Ja vielä pahemmin pään tyhjentää viikonloppu: tiistaista perjantaihin tieto säilyy päässä paremmin kuin perjantaista seuraavaan tiistaihin. Muisti on semmonen kaikkien oppimisen semmonen tosi keskeisesti vaikuttava. (SET3)
- 21) Enemmän hiljaisia ei millään tavalla tunnilla aktiivisia eikä häiritse opetusta eikä muille häiriöksi ikinä, mutta hyvin passiivisia ja omatoimisuutta ei juurikaan ole. (ET2)
- 22) --niin ne on monesti ei kauhean aktiivisia, että ne on jo huomannu, että on hankaluuksia ja sitten menee enemmän aikaa siihen innostamiseen. Toki hekin innostuvat peleihin ja leikkeihin, mutta musta tuntuu, että ne on alussa monesti niitä arkoja monessa asiassa. Toiset toki taas peittää sitä sillä härveltämisellä, mutta mun kokemuksissa on niitä, jotka ei oikein uskalla yrittää. (ET4)
- 23) No yleensä he ovat heikkoja aika lailla kaikissa oppiaineissa, että vaikka monessa ryhmässä mä oon pelkästään englanninopettaja niin kyllä jos mä sanon että mulla on huoli tästä oppilaasta niin monesti se luokanopettaja sanoo että hänelläkin on huoli monessa muussakin aineessa. (ET4)
- 24) -- sitten kirjoituksessa näkyy, voi olla tällainen ortografian ja fonologian yhteensovittaminen niin kuin mahdoton tehtävä, vaikkapa se piipöl lukee siellä aina samalla tavalla tai futpool. Se ääntöasu tulee siihen kirjoitukseen - - Ja sitten lauserakenteiden käsittämättömyys voi olla ihan, mistä ilmenee, ettei siinä ilmaisussa olla päätä eikä häntää. (ET1)
- 25) -- Sitten siellä saattaa olla praksiaan liittyvää eli puheentuoton ongelmaa. -- Ja sitten on olemassa se vaikein, missä nää yhdistyy molemmat eli on sekä tuoton ja ymmärtämisen puolella. Ja sitten on ollu sen tyyppisiä oppilaita, joilla se puhe on sähkösanomatyylistä. Paljon puuttuu suomen kielen ominaispiirteitä eli tää päätteiden käyttö, väärin taivutetaan ja ne on niin kun omituisia ne lapsen muodostamat lauseet. (SET1)
- 26) No tuota, vaikee löytää sanoja, vaikee nimetä asioita, vaikeuksia ymmärtää luettua tekstiä, kirjoittamisessa tietysti kirjoitusvirheitä paljon, geminaattavirheitä, vaikee tavuttaa, rytmittää sitä kieltä ja sitten kielioppiasiat voi olla haastavia, aikamuodot. (SET2)
- 27) Mutta lähtökohtaisesti opetusta ei voi rakentaa semmosen pelkän auditiivisen tiedon varassa toimivaksi, vaan siinä pitää olla aina semmosia visuaalisia elementtejä mukana (SET3)
- 28) -- ja ohjeiden vastaanottaminen saattaa olla äärimmäisen hankalaa. Puhevirrasta ydinasian löytäminen saattaa olla äärimmäisen hankalaa. (SET1)
- 29) Jos käytän kansankieltä, niin on vähän silleen pihalla. Se maailman havaitseminen, ja varsinkin kielen kanssa eläminen on epämääräistä ja haparoivaa. Hirveesti tulee väärinkäsityksiä, riippuu lapsen temperamentista, joko vetäytyy tai on levoton ja ärtynyt tietenkin, kun ei tuu ymmärretyksi. (ET3)
- 30) Yleensä se, että pitää mennä asiat hitaammin. Ja aina se varmistus, ehkä joudut useamman kerran selittämään: tulee kielioppiasia, niin sen joutuu selittämään useamman kerran. Sitten joutuu tekemään näitä varmistuksia, että kuunnelkaa ja keskittykää tähän, ja sitten vielä varmistamaan ymmärsitkö, mitä tässä tehtävässä sanottiin. (SET2)

- 31) Oikeastaan sillon, kun jos me tehdään jotakin sellasta, mitä me ei olla koskaan ennen tehty yhdessä, niin siihen pitää varata aikaa huomattavan paljon enemmän aikaa kuin esimerkiksi tämmöisiä välipalatehtäviä me ei voida kauheesti tehdä, että meidän välipalatehtävät on koko tunnin mittaisia - - (SET3)
- 32) -- yritän sitten kaikki mitä luokassa voi tehdä. Niin just mietin istumajärjestyksestä lähtien sitä, että miten mä saan sen, että jos on tarkkaavaisuuden kanssa ongelmaa, että miten se saadaan maksimoitua se tarkkaavaisuus ja minimoitua häiriötekijät, ja ei oo yhdentekevää vieruskaverit. Ja sitten myös viestintä kotiin, ja olen yhteydessä kotien kanssa, ja otan huomioon kotien toivomukset. - - (ET1)
- 33) - - Mehän ollaan opettajat semmosia moottoriturpia, että aina siinä kun on ryhmässä on (SLI oppilas) niin lähtee siitä omaa puhetempoa hidastamaan, ja ohjeet tulee lyhyinä. Ja sitten se, että sen tunnin struktuuri on semmoinen, että se oppilas tietää, että rakenne menee näin, mitä tulee seuraavaksi, että se pystyy ennakoimaan ja orientoitumaan siihen mitä on tulossa, ja yleensä sitä lasta auttaa visuaaliset merkit siitä, mitä on tulossa, miten se tunnin rakenne koostuu. (SET1)
- 34) Varmaan se on tärkein muistaa, että yks kanava kerrallaan. Että mä en puhu ja kirjoita, tai vaadi lapselta, että puhuu ja kirjoittaa yhtä aikaa niitä asioita, vaan että on se yksittäinen kanava käytössä. Ja jos se on se heikko niin mikä on sen tuki, visualisoidaanko se. Tietysti se,, että se katsekontakti on äärimmäisen tärkeä, kun kirjoittaa taululle tai on kääntyneenä muualle niin silloin mä en puhu. -- (SET1)
- 35) Se vaatii opettajalta etukäteen tarkkaa suunnittelua. Voi olla, riippuu siitä ryhmästä, täytyy etukäteen miettiä yks tai kaks tilaa jossa on joku aikuinen johon voi lähettää lapsia, jos tulee aggressiopusuksia, ettei välttämättä riitä yks. Että täytyy olla se oppimisalue skannattuna, että minne mä lähetän kenenkin, ja kuka aikuinen siellä on ottamassa. (ET3)
- 36) Ei ehkä muuta, kun mun mielestä tärkeintä on, että se lapsi oppii jotain, että se uskaltaa sanoa jotain englanniksi. Että on meillä niitä esimerkiksi se oppilas, joka mulla on kutosella, niin on HOJKSattu, että sitten vaan karkeasti otetaan ne asiat, millä se tekee elämässään jotain, että se edes vähän pärjäisi sillä englannilla, ettei rupea yrittämään edes ihan liian vaikeesti. (ET4)
- 37) -- putoaminen tapahtuu niin pitäs todella miettiä kun luodaan ne tavoitteet ja oppimissuunnitelma, että pitäs oikeesti miettiä sinne että mikä hyödyttää tätä oppilasta. Onko se nyt se että hän oppii täydellisesti käyttämään konditionaalia ja futuuria, kun on ihan hakemista siinä, että miten kirjoitetaan koira ja kissa. Että kyllä mä ajattelen, että siinä semmoinen että opettajanakin olla armollinen ja tajuta, että nyt jos tämä on se miten tämä opetus järjestetään, niin sitten niitä tavoitteita pitää madaltaa. Mä olen ainakin huomannut, että se oppilas on itse myös iloinnut siitä, että hänen ei tarvii tavoitella semmoisia asioita, mitkä ei oo realistisia ainakaan tolla opetusmäärällä.--. (ET2)
- 38) - -mulla on siellä yks tämmöinen oppilas, ja hänellä on käytössä se e-kirja, mutta mä oon kokenut sen vähän huonona. Kun se on joo helpompi, mikä on hyvä, mutta se on niin pelkistetty ja ruma, että se lapsikaan ei tykkää siitä kirjasta. Se on tosi ikävää, että joutuu käyttämään. Ja sitten se on vähän vaikee, kun ne tehtävänumerot ei pidä toisten tehtävien kanssa ihan paikkaansa, ja siinä on itse asiassa ihan liian vähän tehtäviä hänelle niin kun suhteessa, että mä oon kokenut sen e-kirjan aika huonoja. (ET4)
- 39) - - Kyllä myöskin mukautan sitä opetusta sen mukaan, että vaatimustaso voi olla, että kaikki tekee tämän verran, ja saa tehdä vielä lisää. Niin sitten myös eriyttää, vaikka kotitehtäviä. Jokaiselta jotain vaaditaan mutta... (ET1)
- 40) Joo mä teen eri kokeet, ja he tekee sen sitten yleensä ohjaajan tai erityisopettajan kanssa kun mä valvon toista koetta. Sitten siinä se aikuinen pystyy kattomaan ja antamaan vinkkejä yks tehtävä



kerrallaan tai värillisellä paperilla, mikä nostaa sitä tekstiä esiin eri tavalla, suurennettuna, ja sitten tehtävät on niin ettei välttämättä tarvii tuottaa, vaan että se on tunnistaminen, yhdistä vastaavuus. (ET3)

- 41) Koejärjestelyissä just annetaan pidempi aika kokeelle, ja aina on helpotetut kokeet. Ja sitten yleensä, tai aina vois sanoa, että aina on ollu koetilanteessa ohjaaja mukana. Joko minä olen lähtenyt tekemään niiden oppilaiden kanssa koetta, joilla on se, tai jonkun verran myös teen sitä, että jaan koealuetta kahteen osaan tai vaikka neljään osaan. Jos on neljän kappaleen koealue, niin otetaan kappale kerrallaan. Ja semmoisia tavoitteiden, nytkin kun nää on yläkouluun siirtymässä niin huomaa, että niitä on pitänyt madaltaa ihan hirveästi myös koetilanteessa, että siinä niin kuin tulee. Että jätetään joitain tiettyjä tehtävätyyppejä pois, ja apusanalistoja ja laatikossa on sanastoa tueksi siihen. (ET2)
- 42) Nimenomaan niitä tuettuja kokeita, eli lapset tulee tänne, koska täällä on ensinnäkin vähemmän meluärsykettä siitä ympäristöstä. Ja sitten, että niitä kokeita pilkotaan pienempiin osiin, ja instruktioit käydään yhdessä läpi. Ja sitten voi olla, että on helpotettuja kuuntelutehtäviä, tai että lapsella on teksti edessä, vaikka se on kuuntelutehtävä, ja siellä on niitä ydinasioita näkyvillä. Sitä koerakennetta muokataan sen lapsen mukaan. Mutta suurin merkitys näyttää olevan sillä, että se lapsi kokee, että hän on tuetusti kokeessa. (SET1)
- 43) Ja sitten me ollaan tehty niitä kirjasarjan suullisia kokeita. Tän ryhmän kanssa ei vielä, mutta sen porukan kanssa, jota opetin aikasemmin, niin neljännellä luokalla tehtiin kaikki suullisetkin kokeet. Koska ryhmä on pieni, niin siihen myöskin pystyy ottamaan aikaa, ja se on mun mielestä kertonut oppilaan kielitaidosta huomattavasti vielä paljon enemmän kuin se kirjallinen koe. Sitä mä toivoisin, että olisi aikaa tehdä enemmänkin. (SET3)
- 44) Ja jos menetelmistä ihan puhutaan, niin kuvalliset, paljon kuvallista. Ja sitten esimerkiksi pantomiimi on osoittautunut hirveen hyväksi, kun siinä ei tarvita sanallista viestintää ollenkaan. Ja jos lapsi vaan rohkaistuu, niin hän pääsee mukaan siihen ihan samaan mitä muutkin tekee, koska se on kuitenkin niin tärkeää. Tämmönen kinesteettinen, taktillinen, toiminnallinen. (ET3)
- 45) Tarinat eli jos vaikka adjektiiveja, lyhyiden adjektiivien vertailu niin siihen täytyy keksiä tarina - sehän toimii kaikille. Se ei oo muistisäännön pänttäämistä, vaan tarinan kautta muistetaan mitä tapahtuu siinä ja siinä, mutta semmoset toimii hyvin kaikille myös SLI oppilailla. (ET3)
- 46) Me käytetään vuorovaikutusta todella paljon ja mä vaadin, että kaikki osallistuu, viittaamalla joo, mutta kysyn myös kaikilta. Ja pyydän toistamaan, ja sitten mä oon käyttäny paljon niitä taitavia lapsia mallittajina eli, jos he osaa jo lausetasoisesti vastata, niin me toistetaan myös niiden toisten lasten vastauksia, koska he saa siitä hirveesti hyvää palautetta, ja sitten toiset lapset tajuaa sen, että lapsikin voi osata, et tulee semmonen. (SET3)
- 47) Se mikä on ollut äärimmäisen tärkeä, niin on ollut peili lapsella edessä kun harjoitellaan tiettyjä asioita, että semmonen kinesteettinen aistimus siitä ääntämisestä ja sen visuaalinen näkeminen, niin suusta korvaan ja korvasta suuhun käy se. Monesti unohdetaan se, että me oikeasti tarvitaan eri aistikanavien tuottamia ärsykeitä silloin kun me opetellaan kieltä, että ihan semmosia asioita siihen muistinrakentamiseen ja mieleenpainamiseen, kokonaisuuksien haltuunottoon, niin niihin käytetään ihan samanlaisia kuntouttavia menetelmiä, kun käytetään lasten kanssa, joilla on havaintotoiminnoissa pulmia. (SET1)
- 48) Ennen kun mennään englanninkieleen, niin ihan turha on mennä papattamaan mitään prepositioita, jos ei ensin pyri luomaan suhdetta siihen lapseen. Ensin pyritään löytämään, että mikä se on se yhteinen kieli. Tukiopetukset on hirveen tehokkaita siinä mielessä, että sä oot sen lapsen kanssa yleensä kahestaan, ja siihen saa luotua semmosen erilaisen ilmapiirin kuitenkin. (ET3)

- 49) Sitä lasta itseään rauhoittaa se, että se tulee paikkaan, jossa on tietty struktuuri. Ja mulla on tietyt paikat, mistä se lapsi voi seurata, mitä tullaan tekemään seuraavaksi, ja mitä multa vaaditaan tän tunnin aikana. Et sitten itse sille oppimiselle jää tilaa, eikä sille että: ”Miten mä selviän sosiaalisesti tästä tilanteesta, ja mä näyttäisin tajuavan niin kuin kaikki muutkin, että missä mennään, vaikken tajua yhtään missä mennään”. Että se on hirveän tärkeä, että se lapsi kokee sen turvallisen, turvalliseksi sen rakenteen ja tietää mitä tehdään. (SET1)
- 50) Se mikä näiden erityisoppilaiden kanssa on iso, tärkeä juttu on se rohkasu, että se itsetunto, joka heillä monesti on: ”mä en mitään osaa, kun mä oon niin heikko”, siihen kun pystyy pönkittämään sitä niin antamaan niitä mahiksia, että katopa kun osasit hienosti tän jutun. Ja kun saa muiden kuullen kehua niin se tekee jo tosi paljon. -- (ET1)