

“Vähän heitettiin syvään päähän ja katottiin et uidaanko”

- Primary school teachers' readiness to teach early

English to young learners

Master's Thesis

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<p>Tiivistelmä – Abstract</p> <p>Suomessa kielten opiskelu on aloitettu perinteisesti kolmannelta luokalta, joka on Euroopan viitekehyksessä verrattain myöhäinen aloitusaika. Varhennetun kieltenopetuksen puolesta puhuvat useat 2000-luvulla toteutetut neuropsykologiset tutkimukset ja niiden tulokset, jotka osoittavat aikaisemman aloituksen hyödyt mm. puheen sujuvuudessa sekä kognition kehittämisessä. Näihin perusteluihin nojaten hallitus päätti A1-kielen varhentamisesta, jonka myötä A1-kieli päätettiin aloittaa ensimmäiseltä vuosiluokalta viimeistään kevätlukukaudesta 2020 alkaen. Myös vuosiviikkotuntien määrää korotettiin kahdella. Varhentamista testattiin hallituksen Kärkihankkeella lukuvuonna 2018-29, jolloin koulut saivat määrärahoitusta varhennetun kieltenopetuksen järjestämiseen.</p> <p>Kyseisen päätöksen myötä yhä useampi luokanopettaja tulee opettamaan kieliä alkuopetuksessa, sillä luokanopettajan katsotaan olevan muodollisesti pätevä opettamaan kaikkia alakoulussa opetettavia aineita, vaikka minkäänlaisia kieliopinnoja ei olisikaan taustalla. Tämä ei kuitenkaan takaa opettajien valmiutta toteuttaa laadukasta kieltenopetusta. Tämän Pro gradu -tutkielman tarkoituksena oli teemahaastatteluiden avulla selvittää niin alakoulun luokan- kuin kieltenopettajien valmius opettaa varhennettua englantia 1-2. luokkalaisille. Aineisto kerättiin alkuvuodesta 2019 Keski-Suomessa, ja yhteensä kuutta opettajaa haastateltiin aiheen tiimoilta.</p> <p>Tulokset osoittivat, että täydennyskoulutuksen tarve on suurta etenkin vanhemman koulukunnan opettajille, joiden omista kieliopinnoista on jo aikaa. Kaikki haastateltavat peräänkuuluttivat myös opettajankoulutuslaitoksen opetuksen uudistamista vastaamaan nykyistä tilannetta lisäämällä pakollisia kielipedagogisia opintoja osaksi luokanopettajan koulutusohjelmaa. Lisäksi opettajien välinen yhteistyö nousi suureen rooliin vastausten perusteella. Tutkimus luo pohjaa myös jatkotutkimusaiheille, joita varhennuksen myötä tarvitaan lisää.</p>	
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1 INTRODUCTION

The demand for foreign language competence is increasingly present in the modern, globalized world, and the role of languages has gained more importance also in the core curriculum for basic education. The new core curriculum recognizes the role of language in everyday school work, stating that “every teacher is a language teacher” (POPS 2014: 127). This shifts focus to the extensive use of foreign languages that should not be limited to language classes only. The effectiveness of foreign language learning has been hoped to increase with an earlier start to foreign language learning, which will be introduced extensively in Finland during the academic year 2019-2020.

The introduction of earlier language classes is supported by neuropsychological studies conducted in the 2000’s (see e.g. Korpilahti 2010; Lehtonen 2010; Peltola 2010). According to the studies, language learning seems to be highly beneficial during younger age as it increases the cognitive reserve in children’s brains. Some of the studies (Muñoz 2006, De Bot 2014, Jaekel et al 2017) conducted on early language learning provide controversial implications, but the majority seems to agree on the benefits of earlier language exposure. Moreover, the children who begin to learn languages before the age of 8 have been noted to become more fluent in both grammar and pronunciation. The benefits of earlier start to foreign language learning is also recognized by neuropsychologists in Finland, who (Vuoksima and Vedenkangas 2017) recommend to begin to learn languages preferably before the age of 9.

To meet this need, the Finnish government has prepared a new amendment that requires all schools to provide A1-language classes from first grade onwards, beginning in 2020 at the latest. They have also introduced a Key Project, which aims to prepare schools to this earlier start of foreign language learning by offering additional funding to schools and education organizers, and in-service training to primary school teachers. The main aim is to encourage pupils to choose languages and to study them more than the minimum hour supply requires in order to utilize the benefits of early language learning (Ministry of Culture and Education 2017).

Even though the benefits of early language learning (ELL) seem undeniable in light of neuropsychology and cognitive studies, the success in ELL rests mainly on the shoulders of primary school teachers, who are the ones responsible for executing beneficial ELL classes. This requires measures from the education organizers (i.e. schools and municipalities) to assure proper quality of early language teaching. These measures include adequate in-service training for both class teachers and language teachers, multiprofessional cooperation within municipalities, sufficient support for primary school teachers and clear goals and guidelines to organize beneficial early language education. If teachers are left with no support nor any additional training, increase in language learning results seems to be hardly achievable.

Primary teachers' readiness to teach languages during the first years of primary school has not been yet studied in the Finnish context. It is crucial to provide this kind of information prior to the new amendment taking place for the schools and municipalities to be able to answer to the needs to the teachers. This study aims to find out whether primary school teachers in Central Finland consider themselves ready and able to teach ELL, and whether they have been provided with adequate training and tools to execute successful ELL classes. Qualitative method and theme interviews offered the possibility to get in-depth information from the teachers themselves, as they are the key instrument in succeeding in ELL.

This study will provide concrete implications to teachers themselves and to any primary education organizers, who will face the challenge of providing beneficial ELL classes during the next academic year. First, the theory behind early language learning and teaching will be clarified in a more general level in chapter 2, tying it then to the Finnish context in chapter 3. Second, the aim and the research questions, as well as the methodology, will be explained in chapter 4. Third, in chapter 5 the research questions will be answered by the interviewed teachers', as they draw on their experiences and thoughts about earlier language instruction. Finally, chapter 6 will provide concrete implications for improving primary teachers' readiness to teach early languages in the future, as this will be their reality from the academic year 2019-2020 onwards.

2 EARLY FOREIGN LANGUAGE LEARNING

The best possible age for beginning to learn languages has been debated for some decades now, and the current trend seems to be pointing to the direction of an earlier start. This is believed to strengthen the children's future language skills and affect their motivation in foreign language learning (Edelenbos et al 2006: 13). In this chapter, I will look into the theoretical side of this through research conducted on early language learning. First, the theory behind learners' age in relation to foreign language learning will be clarified, specifically concentrating on early language learning. Second, I will explain the main principles of early foreign language learning, intending to define the main guidelines that have been set and examined for young learners of foreign languages and for the teachers of young learners. Last, the role and importance of a teacher in early language learning will be examined.

2.1 Age factor in foreign language learning

The roots of the early language learning research date back to 1959, when two Canadian brain surgeons suggested that there is a critical age for language learning (Penfield and Roberts 1959). In their neurophysiological study, Penfield and Roberts argued that learning a second language should begin between the ages 4-10, and that the optimal age would end before puberty. They based their view on a neurological explanation, which suggested that children's brains were more elastic than adults', and thus easily shaped. This elasticity ceased with maturation (Penfield and Roberts 1959). Their view on the critical period hypothesis (CPH) was supported by other researchers, such as Lenneberg. He (1967) suggested that the rapid growth of nerve connections, that occurs in younger children's brain, corresponds with their language acquisition. However, these views have been criticised as they have merely focused the studies on first language acquisition, but still been applied to second and foreign language learning, too.

The critical age hypothesis motivated a wave of empirical studies in the 1970's. Muñoz cites Krashen et al's (1979: 161 as cited in Muñoz 2006: 2) summary of the findings from that decade, and reports on the generalization that older learners acquire the target language faster due to their stage of cognitive development remaining higher. However, it was also generalized that those who are exposed to a foreign language during early childhood develop a higher

proficiency than those beginning foreign language learning as adults. Muñoz notes, though, that the view “the earlier the better” concerning foreign language learning might not be adequate (2006: 6). To support this, she draws on several studies (Cummins and Swain 1986; Lapkin et al 1980; Harley 1986) on older learners outperforming younger learners.

Muñoz also argues that instead of focusing on the age limit, it would be more relevant to concentrate on the period in which foreign language learning takes place (2006: 7). That is to say the earlier age might not suffice if the target language is not learned adequately. This shifts the focus from the learner’s age to the amount of exposure that they receive. Ultimately, language learning is always a process and whether or not there is an optimal age for it, one thing is for sure: everyone can learn languages if they so wish, and different age levels offer different types of strengths in the process. Therefore, age needs to be noted when teaching languages, as different age levels, as well as different people, require different types of assistance.

DeKeyser and Larson-Hall (2005) argue that the older learners’ advantage is their use of faster, explicit learning mechanisms. This is to say adults are able to use more complex strategies and thus acquire the desired knowledge faster than children. Younger children, on the other hand, use implicit types of methods since their cognitive abilities have not developed to the extent where use of the more complex, explicit mechanisms would be supported, which implies that their learning proceeds slower. However, children take no shortcuts when processing information as they process the information implicitly. Thus, even though their learning processes may seem slower, they are eventually able to process more complex structures and rules (DeKeyser and Larson-Hall 2005: 103).

Johnstone (2002: 9) agrees on the idea that earlier exposure results in higher competence later in life, compared to those who start learning languages in adulthood. He also argues (2002: 12) that an earlier start would be highly beneficial for children’s literacy skills and language awareness as it links the first and the additional languages together, allowing productive connections to be made. This would mean that children’s multilingual practices become more apparent and that the gap between their first language and the target language would eventually reduce.

Some empirical studies have been conducted on early language learning benefits in the long run. Muñoz reported on the BAF (Barcelona Age Factor) -project (2006: 13), which was a

longitudinal study including almost 2000 participants varying from very young age to over 18 year-olds. Data was collected from three districts in Barcelona for over 6 years (from 1996 until 2002) and the aim was to find out whether younger children would eventually bypass the older learners. The study confirmed DeKeyser and Larson-Hall's argument of the slower, implicit type of learning. Young learners involved in the study did not bypass the older ones in time, which was mostly dependent on the insufficient exposure of the target language. Young learners were taught the same hours as the older learners, even though the amount of exposure was crucial in younger children's learning process - as clarified above, implicit mechanisms take more time to be comprehended than explicit, which slows down the learning process. This resulted in older learners, who were capable of learning faster and more effectively, outperforming the younger learners. Muñoz concluded that the success in foreign language acquisition is dependent on the amount of exposure, and that early learning is relevant for implicit skills (2006: 34).

Another longitudinal study called ELLiE (Early Language Learning in Europe) was conducted in Europe, concerning seven countries and approximately 1400 children in the period of three years (Enever 2011: 12). Taking the scale and length of this study into account, the authors argued that it provides fuller insight and suffices for a broad generalization (2011: 18). The main findings of the study proved that the average learner achieved level A1 (Common European Framework of Reference) during the study, most of young learners began learning a foreign language with a very positive mindset and those who remained positive throughout the study period received better results. Moreover, the individual differences affected the children more at 10-11 years old than at 7-8. This speaks for the early language learning: the stage where individual differences play a minor role should be utilized in order to gain the benefits and provide children with similar chances. Furthermore, children tend to begin language learning with a positive attitude and if that could be maintained, the results would speak for themselves in the future.

Countering the claim that the question of age in language learning is one of the single most important factor, Muñoz and Singleton (2011) argue that instead of focusing on the starting age, the amount and quality of exposure should be more of interest when regarding successful foreign language learning. They criticize the critical period hypotheses by drawing on several variabilities associated with it and thus reducing its reliability. Moreover, they suggest that the maturation, when it comes to language learning, should be regarded more seriously and not

only concentrating on the controversial downsides of it. They conclude that earlier exposure to languages seems to be highly beneficial, which is in line with for example the findings of ELLiE (2011), Jaekel et al (2017) and De Bot (2014), but that instead of focusing solely on age, other qualities need to be weighed more when studying foreign language learning.

The conclusions that can be drawn from these extensive studies are that early exposure to the target language is beneficial especially for the fluency in pronunciation in later stages, the amount of exposure needs to be considered and the teachers play a great role in the success of early learning. The amount of exposure seems to remain a key feature in acquiring the language, which would promote more frequent language sessions instead of one specific time slot each week. In order to retain the positive, eager mindset that most of the pupils possess when beginning to learn languages, the teacher needs to function as a role model and plan the activities so that they suit the pupils' own interest. Early language teaching principles and the teacher's role have a great effect on this, and they will be discussed in the following chapters.

2.2 Early language teaching principles

As discussed above, age and the cognitive abilities as well as cognitive development in relation to age and learning are one of the key factors in young children's EFL (English as a foreign language) learning. As age and the stage of cognitive ability are linked to one another, the content of teaching EFL should match this setting. Success in learning EFL and in teaching it to young learners depends on various factors. Early starting age, adequate amount of exposure, teachers' training and ongoing support for mastering the professionalism in the target language, language pedagogy, teaching strategies and other pedagogical skills, appropriate materials provided and the national authorities' support were mentioned as the most crucial provisions for successful language learning (Edelenbos et al 2006: 54).

The above mentioned factors were supported by Lopriore and Krikhaar (2011: 78) as they recognized the importance of them in the ELLiE report and also highlighted the status of EFL in the curriculum and within schools. This indicates that when a foreign language is regarded as important and as something that is worth investing in, the materials provided are usually up to date and support learning, the school environment is supportive towards learning languages and international projects and exchanges are being organized as well as the teachers themselves

thrive in their job. Thus, learners themselves regard languages as an important skill to master as well.

Saunders-Semonsky and Spielberger (2004) reported on a successful model for early language learning. They initiated and maintained a program for foreign language learning in Georgia Elementary School as they wanted to provide a success-story for policy-makers, principals and teachers within the field of foreign language teaching. The program eventually extended to 15 other schools as well, and by the time of the publication, over 14, 000 pupils had attended the program. The key factors that led to the success of this program were an extensive use of the target language (instructions offered in a target language every day, minimum of 30 minutes per day), frequent assessment, a variety of professionals taking part in the program (university professors training teachers and assuring better performance, The Department of Education and local administrators funding and providing adequate equipment and materials for a successful teaching model) and an active contact with learners' parents (including them in the learning process whenever possible). This supports the previous requirements for sufficient exposure and the importance of the status of a foreign language: without a status as an important field of education, this program and thus the foreign language learning that they promoted would not have been funded nor presented as required.

As mentioned above, young learners process the given information implicitly due to their undeveloped cognitive skills. Therefore, teachers make use of implicit learning strategies when teaching young learners. Implicit learning is characterised as a product of the language use in situational contexts, meaning that learners are being provided with opportunities to engage with the language in question. It happens incidentally through activities, without being fully aware of it (Temple 2005). Usually the emphasis is on the communicative function of a language. Based on this characterization, EFL for young learners should be taught through active learning strategies, such as playing, singing and acting, and the amount of exposure needs to be adequate as well.

Jaekel et al (2017: 7) recognize the requirements for good ELL outcome mentioned above, such as amount of exposure and adequate teacher training, and they also draw attention to the communication between teachers and the fitting methodology for primary school. This endorses the use of communicative, active learning strategies in ELL classrooms. If a teacher fails to provide age-appropriate methodology and the required assistance and support that is essential

for the child's development, the child's full potential cannot be reached (Enever 2015: 23). Moreover, Djigunovic and Lopriore (2011: 48) underline the role of learning environment and the feeling in the FL classroom - making learners feel comfortable and learning feel like fun has a strong positive effect on the ELL outcome.

The main goal of ELL should be thought as a long-term one, resulting in sustaining a high level of motivation as Jaekel et al (2017: 12) argue. In a more short-term scale, they suggest that this can be achieved through concentrating merely on a successful transition from primary to secondary level and there onwards. At an early stage the main focus lies on arising children's interest and excitement towards the target language and in building a base for future language learning. As mentioned in section 2.1, children tend to begin learning languages with an open, positive attitude, and maintaining that sense of excitement should be, and usually is, one of the main focuses of ELL.

The effect of the pupils' attitudes was tested and confirmed in the ELLiE study, as the researchers found a clear relation between children's attitudes and comprehension levels (2011: 52). The more positive attitude children had towards language learning, the better their comprehension was towards the end of the study. Moreover, as Jaekel et al (2017: 11) state, taking into account children's cognitive levels, listening and speaking exercises should have the main focus in ELL, and literacy skills (i.e. writing and reading) are introduced gradually, targeting word recognition. Edelenbos et al (2006: 129) support this view and underline the importance of raising awareness and thus motivating children in language learning. Creating a positive approach towards language learning is, according to them (2006: 134), the most important pedagogical principle in ELL.

In order to create a positive atmosphere in the classroom and to maintain children's motivation, Enever (2015: 24) puts strong focus on the importance of balancing between the enjoyment and the cognitive engagement within a task. Such balance is important to keep in mind when designing teaching materials and methodology for young language learners. In the ELLiE study (2011) this balance and its changing nature were noted as the children's preferences for language learning activities were measured. As children grew older and as their cognitive abilities developed, their preferences shifted from merely games, singing and playing to writing and reading activities, i.e. towards more focused work. However, teaching methods should remain age-appropriate, and children's individual differences need to be taken into account, as

Djigunovic and Lopriore (2011: 59) note. Similarly, Edelenbos et al (2006: 138) emphasize the need for teaching young children in a way that provides them with an opportunity to learn with all their senses. This allows different types of children, i.e. different types of learners, to engage in the activities with what suits their own learning style best, and thus decreases the negative effects of individual differences. Age appropriate language learning instructions and practices, multisensory learning and taking children's physical tendency into account were noted to have the strongest implications for successful classroom practices (Edelenbos et al 2006: 142).

2.3 The role of a teacher in ELL

The role of a teacher in the process of learning and teaching ELL became apparent already in the previous section, as learners' engagement, adequate teacher training and appropriate materials as well as teaching methods were discussed in relation to early learning principles. Several authors have recognized the importance of a teacher as the single most essential factor in ELL. For example Nikolov and Mihaljevic Djigunovic (2011: 106) regard teachers as the key players in ELL, as "they are not only the main sources of input and motivation, but they are also responsible for what happens in classrooms". The role of a teacher was underlined also in the ELLiE study (2011) as the authors positioned language teachers in the centre of the process of language learning and argued that it is due to the teachers' abilities that a success in ELL can be achieved. Teacher was seen as the figure who can bring together several influential factors and bridge the gap between not only different learners, but also between schools and homes.

Moreover, especially teachers of young children and their role in children's lives is inevitable (Enever 2014: 231). They play a vital role in a child's socialization and cognitive development, and are thus able to shape children's attitudes and realise their full potential. This can be achieved through sufficient pedagogical skills (Graham 2017: 953). On the other hand, as Nikolov and Mihaljevic Djigunovic (2011: 102) argue, unqualified teachers and insufficient pedagogy affect children in an opposite way as they begin to develop negative feelings and decrease motivation towards learning. Keeping this in mind it is crucial to provide quality training for teachers and to ensure their in-work ability.

Even though ELL has been introduced to lower age groups and in several countries during the past decade, it has been argued that the number of motivated, skilled and appropriately trained

EFL teachers is not meeting the demand (Enever 2014: 231). The need for well-prepared teachers was recognized in the ELLiE study (2011: 141), as the findings suggested that success in foreign language learning was the result of adequate pre-service education and regular in-service training. Graham (2017) provides support for this with her findings on the effect of teachers' language abilities and the quality of instruction on the scores of foreign language learning. This points to the relevance of pre-service education, as adequate language skills and appropriate language pedagogy are generally a result of a good-quality teacher training. Primary level language teachers, as well as any educators, need to be properly trained in order to be able to provide children with the instruction and support that is relevant for their individual development. Teachers need awareness and skills not only in language pedagogy, but in other areas as well, such as evaluation, tools for creating a safe, supportive classrooms and different learning and teaching strategies suitable for individuals (Edelenbos et al 2006: 54). Moreover, teachers need to be aware of multiculturalism and its effects on their classrooms (Edelenbos et al 2006: 54). Thus, intercultural awareness needs to be addressed already during the pre-service stage.

Teachers themselves also recognize the importance of sufficient language skills and pedagogy, as De Bot (2014) noted in study concerning teachers in the Netherlands. He found out that several teachers felt they were not capable to teach English as their training had not fully addressed teaching English at a primary level. This points directly to the need for improved teacher training, for both primary school teachers and EFL teachers. The role of English as a lingua franca, as well as multilingual and -cultural aspects, need to be recognized when planning teacher education.

Nikolov and Mihaljevic Djigunovic (2011: 112) highlight the importance of teacher education when discussing curricula and guidelines for national language learning programmes, and state that when planning teacher training, emerging needs need to be taken into account. Teacher training needs to keep in line with those needs. As Edelebons et al (2011: 141) found out, ELL-specific principles should serve as a guideline to be considered when planning teacher training, as they tend to have strong practical suggestions for developing the training. Young learner-specific guidelines and language pedagogy could be implemented into both primary teacher and EFL teacher education, and sufficient language skills need to be ensured not only for language teachers, but for everyone involved in the process of early learning of English. The way to move forward is simple: preparing an adequate number of motivated teachers who are willing and

trained to work with young learners, as well as planning quality training programmes to ensure their competence in both language skills as well as language pedagogy (Nikolov and Mihaljevic Djigunovic, 2011: 112)

The goal for teacher training is to provide successful teachers, as the ultimate goal for a teacher is to succeed in teaching the learners and making them learn. Tragant Mestres and Lundberg (2011), as part of the ELLiE research team, looked into the qualities of successful teachers in terms of the learners reaching above average targets in foreign language learning and maintaining the learners' motivation throughout the three years that the data was collected. They included several case studies from all the ELLiE countries, and compiled the results. One notable factor was the teachers' engagement in developing their language skills, as all of the successful teachers were fond of the language they taught (2011: 99). Additionally, teachers' involvement in in-service training was noted. Successful teachers attended in-service training courses regularly, and as noted above, made the effort to develop the target language also during their freetime.

Teaching styles were also considered, and it was found (2011: 90) that successful teachers used multiple interactive styles when communicating with their pupils and designed varying activities that were fitting to the age group in question. Music and playing had a great role in the activities. However, teaching styles were noted to vary a great deal and different styles resulted in similarly good scores. This highlights the room for variation, as not all the teachers need to teach in a similar way in order to reach great scores. Finally, and as some could regard, most importantly, the teachers' attitudes were noted to play a significant role in the learning process (2011: 100). When teachers regarded early language learning as important, and expressed interest in the target language, their teaching was also successful. Attitudes can be argued to contribute to the amount of work put into the teaching/learning process, designing activities and to the willingness to not only participate in in-service training, but also develop language skills individually. Teachers' own engagement and enthusiasm towards their work can thus be regarded as some of the most important qualities of a good teacher.

Even though motivation and personality related traits were considered to be important in the learning process, teachers' own language abilities play a role in the learning process, too. As discussed in the section 2.2, sufficient exposure to the target language is necessary in order to provide a successful model in ELL. Graham (2017) confirmed this, arguing that frequent

exposure to the target language is a key factor in successful ELL. However, the amount, ie. the quantity of exposure itself does not suffice, quality needs to be considered, too. The quality of exposure is dependent on the teachers' own language abilities, which puts focus on the importance of teachers' language abilities in relation to successful learning. Graham (2017: 928) argues that "Quality of input is likely to be of as much importance as quantity and type of input, particularly with regard to the language proficiency and pedagogical skills of teachers." This contributes to the earlier arguments of the importance of sufficient teacher training, including adequate language skills as well as language pedagogy. Language teachers, whether they are class teachers or specified language teachers, need to achieve a certain competence in the target language in order to be able to successfully guide their learners.

Additionally, the quality of exposure is argued to impact the learning outcomes and thus it needs to provide a sufficient model for the learners (Muñoz 2006: 34). Furthermore, Unsworth (2014: 539) argues that it is not necessarily the amount of exposure, as in minutes per week, but the teachers' language proficiency that is the best predictor of the learners' scores on vocabulary and grammar. The correct spoken model would also indicate a success in the learners' utterances and thus contribute to their communicative competence. Considering all this, language teachers' own language abilities need to be evaluated and developed through their training, including both pre-service education as well as continuous in-service training.

3 ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE IN THE FINNISH SCHOOL SYSTEM

English is the most widely spoken foreign language in Finland, as Leppänen et al (2011) confirm. The increased number of immigrants, globalization process and the international affairs as well as the role and the wide use of English in media and as a tool for communication internationally have all increased the use of English in Finland. This growth can be seen in schools, too, as English has become the most widely studied language (Niemi et al 2014). This also includes early language education. In this chapter the role of English in Finland, more specifically within the Finnish school system concerning young pupils (grades 1-2), will be discussed. First, I will discuss the importance and wide use of English in Finland more generally. Then, I will shift the focus to the National Core Curriculum and investigate the role of English at the early stages of school presented by the authorities. Third, the question of who should teach English to young pupils, which has arisen as a part of the early language education reform, will be addressed. Finally, I will introduce the current amendment, that is to say the early language education reform, and the Key Project run by the government that was piloted before the actual reform which will be taking place in 2019-2020.

3.1 English in Finland

English has gradually established its role within the Finnish society as the most needed and used foreign language (Leppänen et al 2009: 20). Globalization and English as a lingua franca are related to people's everyday lives as the country becomes more international and intercultural. This positions English in the centre of communication, as it is the common language between different nationalities. Some of the reasons for the significant role of English are listed as globalization, immigration, economic independence as well as the growth of information technologies (Taavitsainen and Pahta 2006). Even though the two official languages in Finland are Finnish and Swedish, English is the most widely spoken language alongside Finnish according to Statistics Finland. In 2006, more than 80% of Finns claimed that they were able to communicate in English (Statistics Finland 2006), whereas the same number regarding skills in Swedish was just over 60%. The different position of the languages adds to this significance: Swedish is a compulsory language in Finland whereas English is not, even though it is the most widely studied. The choices of study will be discussed more below. Moreover, in a study conducted in 2012 the estimated percentage regarding capability in

English was over 90 (Niemi et al 2014), increasing over 10 % between the studies. English can thus be argued to be a part of the basic skills-repertoire. Kangasvieri et al (2011: 45) support this view in their study, as they refer to English as a must even in working life. Almost 90% of the companies in Finland expect their employees to have the basic skills in English.

Leppänen et al (2009) confirm that Finns regard themselves as quite skilled in English. Moreover, attitudes towards English tend to be positive in Finland and Finns regard it as a necessity. As mentioned in the section 2.2, motivation for learning languages tends to be at its highest when young learners begin their additional language studies, and the challenge for teachers is to maintain that motivation throughout the school years. The role of English in our society must affect the motivation towards studying it, as it is regarded as an important skill to master. It remains to be seen whether the early language education reform will have an effect on the students' motivation as well as their skills in English in the future.

As mentioned above, English is the most popular language choice in Finland. It is mostly studied as the A1 language, meaning that the pupils begin to learn English at third grade at the latest. The A1 language is studied extensively throughout the different stages of education (primary and secondary). As reported by The Federation of Foreign Language Teachers in Finland (SUKOL 2016), more than 90% of pupils study English as their A1 language by third grade (approximately age 9). Moreover, more and more municipalities have already taken the early language education as parts of their curriculum, and in approximately third of all the municipalities in Finland children begin to learn A1 language during first or second grade (Skinnari and Sjöberg 2018: 34). Pupils get to choose the language they wish to study as the A1 language themselves (with the help of their parents), even though their choice is affected by the selection of language each municipality has to offer.

The dominance of English can be partly explained due to its popularity within the nation, partly due to the fact that it is often the only language choice available (Kangasvieri et al 2011: 9). Municipalities have to arrange the teaching of additional languages themselves, and as it is not compulsory to offer a variety of language available for studying, the amount can be quite limited. This is to say the area and the schools affect the choices. German, French and Finnish as a second language are the next popular choices (SUKOL 2016), but the learner percentage is minimal compared to English.

3.1.1 Curriculum

Teaching in Finland is regulated by the National Core Curricula (OPS), compiled by the Finnish National Agency of Education (OPH). The curricula describe the aims, objectives and contents of different subjects and also define the key values for education, as well as the conception of learning, in Finland. The aim is to increase equality in education within the country by providing foundations for local curricula (OPH 2014). There are different curricula for different stages of education, as well as local curricula for each municipality (based on the National Core Curriculum), but in the light of this study the National Core Curriculum for Basic Education, referred to as POPS, will be examined more closely. The new core curricula were introduced into practice in 2016. A new curriculum for early education, VOPS, is under construction at the time of this study and will be introduced in 2019, which is why the focus in this study will be on the curriculum for basic education. ELL for grades 1 and 2 (ages 6-8) is noted in the current curriculum briefly as the basic guidelines for A1-language teaching are recommended also for early learning, ie. modifying the aims and the objectives of teaching to suit the pupils' age and cognitive levels.

According to the National Core Curriculum for Basic Education, the focus for teaching and learning English as well as other languages is in the use of languages in different situations, ie. its communicative function (POPS 2014: 124). Learning languages is addressed in such terms as "language awareness" and "language education" which shifts the focus from just learning a language to a more holistic approach. Children are not expected to fully master a language, instead they are being encouraged to notice, engage and use the language in question as much as they can, no matter which level they are at. Teaching is supposed to strengthen the children's confidence in terms of communicating in a foreign language and encourage them to use the language and to communicate in authentic environments (POPS 2014: 127). At the primary level, basic education principles in terms of pedagogy and the children's upbringing are more in the centre of the education process than the language itself. Educational principles, such as respect and appreciation are strongly linked to language learning, too. Children are taught to respect everyone, no matter what their cultural or language background is, and to confront others without any prejudice (POPS 2014: 219). Different cultures and appreciation towards them is mentioned several times in the core curriculum.

Language is not seen as something that is solely limited to classroom context and to the language lessons. The core curriculum highlights the diverse nature of languages and recognizes the possibilities for language learning outside classrooms (POPS 2014: 127). Information technologies and the possibilities that they have to offer are noted regarding the same manner. According to the curriculum (POPS 2014: 219), children should be encouraged to notice different language around them outside school and teaching should be arranged so that it raises children's interest towards different languages. The role of languages is noted also in relation to other subjects, as the skills that children acquire when learning languages are strongly related to other subjects and learning strategies, too (POPS 2014: 127). This was discussed in section 2.1 where the neuropsychological explanations behind language learning processes in young learners' brains were introduced. Skills that children acquire when learning languages, such as different strategies for reading and interpreting different types of texts strongly link to other subjects. This is also why language is not seen as a single subject alongside others, but rather as a bridge between different subjects. Thus, the core curriculum also states that "every teacher is a language teacher" (POPS 2014: 127). In relation to this, cooperation between teachers and pupils and its importance in language learning (as well as in other subjects) was highlighted. As could be interpreted, language education is seen as a common goal for all the teachers.

As the nature of language is diverse, so should the different methods for teaching and learning it be. According to the core curriculum (POPS 2014: 127), language should be included in the everyday life at school. This contributes to the earlier statement that every teacher is also regarded as a language teacher. Different languages should be visible at school and the atmosphere should be encouraging towards learning languages. When it comes to language lessons, learning should be arranged so that it meets the demand for communicative competence. English should be used whenever possible (POPS 2014: 221). The same principles that were already discussed in the section 2.2 are visible also in the Finnish core curriculum. Learning should be fun and carried out as games, playing, singing and stories. These activities offer a tool not only for learning languages but also for learning other types of important skills, such as emotional skills and group work, and also allow different types of attitudes related to languages and cultures to be addressed (POPS 2014: 221). Naturally, the different goals for language learning need to be kept in mind when designing teaching materials and the teaching itself. Through different games, plays and songs pupils get to practice their pronunciation as well as acquire the underlying central structures.

The aims for learning an A1-language are determined for grades 3-6, but as mentioned above, these same aims cover ELL (grades 1-2, with slight modifications to suit the pupils' age) since the actual early learning objectives have not been published yet. The main goal for learning an A1 language at a young age is to begin to notice different languages around, appreciate one's own language, as well as cultural, background and to begin to take responsibility of one's own learning and behaviour (POPS 2014: 219). Teachers need to create an open-minded, safe and encouraging atmosphere within the class where everyone can participate without having to fear fails. The most important objective is the message - how to get the message through in a foreign language (POPS 2014: 219). To reach this, teachers' methods need to support the goal and their teaching should be encouraging in order to create positive associations with the language in questions and language learning as a process. This contributes to the findings from several studies, including ELLiE (see 2.2). Taking the learners age into account, teaching should focus around speaking and playing, writing and reading remain secondary as the pupils have just begun to write and read in their mother tongue. The communicative functions of languages are kept in mind from the very beginning' (POPS 2014: 220).

A good competence in English (8 within a scale from 4-10) after primary school (ie. at the end of grade 6) is determined as Reference Level A2.1 determined by the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (POPS 2014: 222). The description for this level is as follows:

Can understand sentences and frequently used expressions related to areas of most immediate relevance (e.g. very basic personal and family information, shopping, local geography, employment). Can communicate in simple and routine tasks requiring a simple and direct exchange of information on familiar and routine matters. Can describe in simple terms aspects of his/her background, immediate environment and matters in areas of immediate need. (Council of Europe 2018)

The core curriculum underlines the role of English in children's lives and lists noticing that and being able to name some materials presented in English as one of the objective for assessment (POPS 2014: 222). However, the communicative function of languages remains as the key objective for assessment as the goal for the pupils is to be able to communicate and increasingly participate in discussion, as well as be able to respond in a polite manner that suits the culture of the target language. Natural communication is underlined, including possible pauses, strategies for paraphrasing and getting the message through. Overall, the nature of teaching and

learning languages in primary school, according to the core curriculum, is highly communicative and encouraging, which prepares for good skills in the future.

3.1.2 Who teaches early English?

As the current amendment regarding ELL will be introduced at schools in 2020 at the latest (see section 3.2), the question of who will teach English during the first years of primary school has become relevant. The competence requirements for teachers are determined by the government in the Teaching Qualification Decree (986/1998). According to this regulation, class teachers, language teachers as well as special education teachers with the qualification of a class teacher are all entitled to teach early English (during the years 1-2 of primary school). There are no specific requirements for the ELL in terms of qualification requirements. This highlights the need for fruitful cooperation within schools and teacher education. When the current amendment is applied into practice, the need for cooperation between class teachers and language teachers will be essential as the expertise from both occupations will be needed (Skinnari and Halvari 2018). From personal experience as a language teacher student, I would also highlight the need for cooperation between different pedagogic fields during teacher education. The current model is quite individual field based which might hinder the cooperation after graduating, as the learned model has not supported multidisciplinary cooperation.

As discussed in the previous section, the core curriculum for basic education underlines the role of English in the children's everyday lives and the need for holistic language learning that is not only closed to a language classroom. Skinnari and Halvari (2018) agree with this view as they discuss the upcoming amendment. According to them, all teaching should be language aware and enhance multilingualism within schools. This highlights the importance of cooperation between different teachers. Kangasvieri et al (2012: 8) strengthen this view by calling for pedagogical cooperation not only within schools, but also during teacher education at universities. In order to maximise the effect of foreign language learning already from the early stages, the planning of teacher education needs to be more consistent and equality within teacher education is needed. Pedagogical expertise should be available for everyone and cooperation above the field lines needs to be encouraged. Moreover, the quality of teaching and its improvement needs to be continuous and systematically planned (Kangasvieri et al 2011: 49). This includes the cooperation between different specialists (e.g. language teachers and

class teachers), which enhances the possibilities for advantageous cooperation also during later stages.

The equality between different teachers has not always been reached. Even though in-service training has been mentioned various times and its role seems to be inevitably great in supporting the teachers' personal development, language teachers are criticising the scarcity of this type of training available for them (Kangasvieri et al 2011: 51). Areal equality has also been questioned, as majority of these trainings available have been centred to the capital area, which makes it hard to participate from longer distance. Areal equality in terms of multilingualism and making it visible from teachers' perspective has also been questioned. When the population structure is more one-sided and languages are less visible in people's everyday lives, the teachers need to be well language-oriented and conscious towards different languages and cultures (Pyykkö 2017: 21). To leave this only for the teachers themselves to develop can be too much of a burden, when taking into account the workload teachers encounter already. This, again, calls for more quality in-service as well as pre-service education.

As Enever (2014: 231) states, teachers' role in children's socialization as well as developing their attitudes towards learning in the early years of education is crucial. In order for them to make progress in various areas of curriculum and overall social skills, the support from the teacher is very much needed. This strengthens the role of a teacher also in ELL, as the early years of language learning set the base for the upcoming learning. Enever reports on the ELLiE study, and notes that the classroom observations throughout the study revealed that teachers were lacking the necessary language pedagogy, as well as foreign language skills needed to suit the pupils' age (2014: 234). Some common issues included the overuse of the mother tongue, insufficient skills in structuring interaction tasks which decreased the FL production, and the teachers' own anxiety related to their language competence (2014: 240).

As discussed in section 2.2, the success in ELL is dependent on the amount of exposure in target language as well as on the match between cognition and level of difficulty of the tasks - the tasks need to match the children's cognitive abilities in order to allow learning to take place. If the teacher is anxious about their FL skills and thus not willing to speak it enough, or if they are lacking in expertise in language pedagogy, it seems quite unlikely to achieve the benefits of ELL. Thus, primary English teachers need proper training. Class teachers need knowledge

about language pedagogy during their education and the design of appropriate primary English teacher education needs addressing (Enever 2014: 241).

In the end, quality of teaching needs to always come first. It affects not only the general learning results, but also the choice of language learning and appreciation towards multilingualism (Kangasvieri et al 2011: 55). This can be reached through careful planning at the university level and also by providing enough in-service training possibilities. The backbone of good ELL is always age-fitted, great quality language pedagogy (Skinnari and Halvari 2018). The instrument for realizing these ideas into practice are the teachers. In order to achieve good quality learning, good quality teachers need to be involved. These teachers need to be oriented towards early language pedagogy as well as the children and their qualities (Skinnari and Halvari 2018). In order to reach the success of early language learning at the later stages, the initial stages need to be well organized. This means organizing the teacher education (concerning ELL), too. Ultimately, the question of who teaches early English is a key figure when planning teacher education, and in my opinion, students from both class teacher program as well as language teacher program need to be involved.

3.2 Current Amendment and the Key Project

In September 2018 the Finnish government decided to increase the number of A1 language lessons within primary education (Ministry of Culture and Education 2018a). According to the new amendment all of the children starting school in 2019 will begin to learn English already from the first grade, during spring term 2020 at the latest. This obligates every primary school in Finland to offer ELL from the first grade onwards. The amendment is part of the education reform that the Ministry of Culture and Education launched in 2015, aiming to develop the Finnish basic education further. This includes renewing the Finnish basic education, learning environments as well as teachers' abilities. The aim of the reform is to make Finland "the top country in modern and invigorating learning" (Ministry of Culture and Education 2015).

According to the amendment, the number of weekly A1 lessons will increase with two hours that are dedicated to the years 1-2 of basic education. Previously the distribution of weekly A1 language lessons was 16 during primary school, and with the current amendment the total number increases to 18 (Ministry of Culture and Education 2018b). One weekly lesson equals 38 lessons in total (OPH 2014), which increases the total number of A1 language lessons in

primary school from 608 to 684. The increase of weekly lessons means that the lessons do not have to be taken from the existing hours and thus other education will not decrease. The Minister of Culture and Education Sanni Grahn-Laasonen named the new amendment as a historical renewal, as the minimum hours devoted to basic education will increase and children will get more education from year 2020 onwards (Ministry of Culture and Education 2018a). Ministry of Culture and Education has devoted 7.5 million euros to the new amendment for year 2020 and 12 million euros from year 2021 onwards (Ministry of Culture and Education 2018a). Additional budget has also been targeted for in-service training for teachers.

The reasons behind this amendment vary from the educational benefit to increased equality. According to the Ministry of Culture and Education (2018b), earlier start to language learning aims to decrease the areal and socio-economical differences within Finland and to offer equal language education possibilities to every child, regardless of their background. Moreover, they argue that children's natural sensitive period towards learning languages can be utilized better with earlier language learning. Lastly, they suggest that ELL practiced with active learning strategies supports the development of learning skills. The Minister of Education and Culture discusses the importance of diverse language skills and considers children as exceptionally skilled when it comes to acquiring new information (Ministry of Culture and Education 2018a). The scientific explanations behind these factors have been discussed in more depth in the section 2.

Even though according to the amendment all of the primary schools in Finland are required to offer A1 language(s) from year 1 onwards, the choice of the languages offered is left for the schools/municipalities themselves. Ministry of Culture and Education clarify that the aim of the free choice of languages is to take the different areal needs into account and to ensure that language education can be arranged and offered in a best possible way (Ministry of Culture and Education 2018b). However, in my opinion this can also decrease the variety of languages as the most popular choice is, and undoubtedly will be English. In many of the schools a variety of languages cannot be offered due to economical as well as practical reasons - when there are not enough participants for a language class, it cannot be arranged. However, brain research supports the supply of variety of languages and suggests that children should, if possible, begin to learn more difficult (eg. phonologically distant from the mother tongue) languages due to the elasticity and adaptability of young children's brains (Skinnari and Sjöberg 2018: 15). English

will undoubtedly dominate the A1 choices in the near future, but it remains to be seen whether other languages, such as French, German and Russian, will increase their popularity.

The early language learning has been tested in practice with the government's Key Project that began in 2017 (Ministry of Culture and Education 2017). For the project, 96 schools were funded in 2017 in order to provide early language education during the academic year 2017-2018. Additionally, more schools had the opportunity to seek funding for ELL for the academic year 2018-2019. The project is a part of the reform of basic education (see above), aiming to develop the quality of basic education in Finland. The aim of the Key Project is to increase the supply of foreign languages in primary schools as well as to encourage children to begin to study them earlier. In-service training has been offered to teachers of young children to ensure the quality of early language teaching and learning (Ministry of Culture and Education 2017). The teachers who I interviewed for my paper have taken part in this Key Project. They will be introduced in more detail in the next section.

4 THE PRESENT STUDY

In this chapter, I will shed light to the methodology of the present study. First, the aim for this study will be clarified and the research problem, as well as the questions aimed to solve it, will be presented. Second, the framework for this qualitative style research will be discussed. Third, the whole process of data collection will be explained, including semi-structured interviews as the method for collecting data and the participants whom I interviewed. Finally, the data was analyzed using content analysis as the method, and this process will be introduced in the last section of this chapter.

4.1 Aim and research questions

The aim of the present study is to investigate teachers' perception of the concept early language learning and their readiness to teach EFL at an early stage. The study aims to find out whether teachers themselves feel that they are capable to influence the young learners' future English skills and to carry the teaching out in a way that benefits the learners also during later stages. Moreover, teachers' own views regarding ELL and teaching English to 6-8-year-old pupils are in the centre of this study - is the importance of ELL and the benefits that children could possibly receive from it recognized? The importance of ELL and how it is viewed is tied into a bigger concept than just the teachers' own views (such as the environment at children's homes and ideals from their parents, the attitudes at school and the overall perception of the importance of English and/or other foreign languages), but teachers are the ones who are included in the learning process and, as noted in section 2.3, can also have a strong effect on it. This is why in light of this study teachers and their views are considered the most relevant single factor that needs to be studied further.

The research questions of the present study are as follows:

1. How do the teachers taking part in this study perceive Early Language Learning (ELL)?
2. Do the teachers consider themselves able to arrange teaching in a way that benefits the children's language learning also in the future?
3. Do the teachers feel that they have been provided with adequate training and tools in order to meet the needs of the children (regarding ELL)?

As section 2.3 proved, the role of a teacher is crucial in successful ELL. However, the teachers' readiness in terms of language proficiency and attitudes towards teaching languages has not been studied in the Finnish context. Additionally, primary school teachers' education has not been evaluated to see whether it provides primary school teachers (mostly class teachers) the necessary tools to utilize successful language pedagogy in classrooms. To meet this need, six primary school teachers were interviewed in a semi-structured manner to shed light on their experiences and thoughts about early language teaching and their own readiness to successfully provide pupils the tools for successful language learning. Next sections will provide more extensive explanations of qualitative studies as a framework, the choice of method and the data collection process.

4.2 Qualitative method as a framework for the present study

The central phenomenon in this study is teachers' perceptions of ELL and their own readiness to teach it. The answers to the research questions presented above will arise from the experiences and thoughts of the teachers and from the implications and assumptions that can be drawn from them. I chose the qualitative method, as the main goal in this study is to understand the views of the teachers and to be able to draw insights from the data. Ultimately, research purpose and issue determines the method. The core idea in qualitative studies is interpretation and the study of meaning (Hirsjärvi and Hurme 2014: 22). As the purpose in this study was to get closer to the teachers and to allow their voices to be heard, the choice of qualitative method was natural.

Saldaña (2011: 3) explains qualitative studies as an umbrella term for “variety of methods for the study of natural social life”, which can be conducted across multiple fields of study, such as education, sociology and psychology. He (2011: 4) agrees with Hirsjärvi and Hurme on the purpose of qualitative studies, as they can offer understanding of individual and social complexity. He also presents the genres of qualitative research (for more detailed description, see Saldaña 2011), and for the purpose of this study, phenomenological approach was selected as the framework. Phenomenological approach is used to study of the nature and meaning of things (Saldaña 2011: 7). Its purpose is not to investigate and generalize a big number of people and their individual experiences, but rather to find connections with and analyse the collective

experiences of the participants. The vital task of the researcher is to capture the essence of the experience, and to be able to reflect on it to provide implications (Saldaña 2011: 8)

The researcher itself is generally regarded as the primary instrument for data collection in qualitative research. This does not only include the mechanical techniques such as writing, listening, observing and transcribing, but also cognitive and affective processes (e.g. inferring, empathizing and evaluating) (Saldaña 2011: 11). This needed to be kept in mind when designing this study and the method for data collection. I, too, chose interviews and will motivate my choice in the next section.

4.3 Data collection

The data was collected in January-February 2019 in four different schools in Central Finland. Semi-structured interviews were used as a method and six teachers were interviewed individually at their schools. The duration of the interviews varied from 40 to 55 minutes, approximate interview time was 45 minutes. The total length of the interviews was 260 minutes. One of the recordings was contaminated towards the end of the interview but the participant complemented her answers via email. Below, I will explain the theory behind my choice of data collection method and present the participants in more details.

4.3.1 Semi-structured interviews

The purpose of the present study is to offer insight into the issue of early language learning and teaching from the perspective of teachers and discuss their individual thoughts around the subject that is tied into a bigger context. As I wanted to get deeper, individual-based insights into the topic the natural choice of data collection method was interviews. I wanted to place the teachers and their experiences in the center of this study, especially since ELL in the Finnish context is relatively new and the new amendment (see section 3.2) is taking place right now. According to Hirsjärvi and Hurme (2015: 35), interviews are a valid choice of data collection method when the purpose is to place the research issue into a bigger context, to deepen the knowledge around it and to give an active, meaningful role to the individuals participating in the study. They (2015: 41) argue that the role of the interviewer is to forward the message behind the interviewee's ideas, thoughts, experiences and feelings. Dufva (2011: 132) supports this view by pointing out that one of the advantages of interviews is to get the participants'

voices heard. Teachers, who are in the centre of this transition, need to get their voices heard and participate in the decision making process, as they are the ones to put all the new knowledge into practice at schools.

Interviews offer a flexible way of conducting a study where the possibility for misunderstandings is minimized through communication and for example clarifications (Tuomi and Sarajärvi 2018: 73). Hirsjärvi and Hurme (2015: 36) agree with this as they point out that the interview situation is an interactive discussion between two (or more) people which allows the interviewer to ask additional questions and reformulate the questions in order to make sure that they are understood correctly. This is why I chose to interview the participants face to face, to make sure that they understand the questions and are able to provide answers to them. All of the teachers were given the possibility to participate through skype in case a meeting was not possible for them. However, all of the participants chose face-to-face interviews at their schools. Moreover, Saldaña (2011: 32) notes that “our research topic, purpose, and questions form the basis for the subjects you cover and types of questions you ask during an interview, but the improvised conversation may also generate unexpected areas and insights for further inquiry.” This suits the purpose of my study, as personal opinions and experiences are in the centre of it. Thus, generalizing the research problem in a quantitative way among large groups would be difficult and does not serve the purpose of this study.

Typical for semi-structured interviews is the flexible outline of the interview, as the focus is on the themes, their nature and their qualities rather than on confirming some predestined hypotheses (Hirsjärvi and Hurme 2015: 66). I formulated my interview outline keeping this in mind, leaving space for open discussion and including themes that I felt were relevant to the research purpose. As in all interviews, the interviewees are in the centre of interest. How they perceive the issues presented and give meaning to them is crucial for the analysis (Hirsjärvi and Hurme 2015: 48). Characteristically to semi-structured interviews, different themes and questions related to them were presented to the participants, but the discussion moved freely and differently with each participant, depending on the interviewee’s own interests and ideas. As Hirsjärvi and Hurme (2015: 67) note, based on different themes the interviewer can deepen the conversation as far as the research interests require. Moreover, moral and ethical rules need to be kept in mind when conducting the interviews.

Hirsjärvi and Hurme (2015: 103) also point out that preparing the themes and the organization of the question needs to be thought through to secure the necessary data supply. This is why the interview was piloted with one teacher trainee and some required adjustments were made to the structure of the interview for clarification. The actual interviews were carried out face-to-face at the schools where the participants worked. I chose individual interviews for the purpose of my study - each teacher was seen as an individual and their personal opinions and experiences were the most relevant factor for this study. Group dynamics often affect the outcome of the interviews (Hirsjärvi and Hurme 2015: 63) and I wanted to eliminate this by meeting the participants individually. The interviews were conducted in Finnish as it was the first language of all the participants and thus a natural choice to secure the fluency of the interviews. Language choices were kept in mind when designing the interviews questions and their understandability was ensured by piloting the interview. However, as is natural to semi-structured interviews, it was noted that all of the participants would understand and answer the questions in a way that was relevant for them. Participants will be presented in the next section.

4.3.2 The participants

Altogether six teachers took part in this study. The criteria for the participants were 1) that they were currently teaching early English for first or second graders and 2) that they worked at schools which were part of the Key Project experiment (see section 3.2) in Central Finland. This was to ensure that they all had experience of teaching languages to young learners, and thus were able to discuss the qualities of ELL from their own point of view, and that they were aware of the amendment taking place next year. Even though the participants come from the same field of work and operate within the same issue (ELL), they are not solely class teachers nor do they come from one school only, as I wanted to get a broader understanding and see whether there were any similarities in the way they see the research issue even though they operate in different schools. I approached the headmasters of the schools participating in the Key Project and asked for the teachers currently teaching English to first and second graders, whom I then contacted via email. Six out of 18 teachers agreed to be interviewed for the study.

The background information of the teachers (see table 1 below), including age, gender, working experience and education background varied. Five of the six teachers were female and one was a male. This distribution was not surprising, as almost 80% of the teachers in basic education are female (Kumpulainen 2016: 43). Teaching experience varied from 5 years to 30 years and

the years of teaching were not spent only in basic education but also in pre-primary schools and daycare. Two of the teachers had begun to work in pre-primary schools and continued for 10-15 years before educating themselves further to become class teachers. Both of them had then worked 2-3 years as classrooms teachers. Three of the teachers had worked as class teachers during their whole careers, two of them for approximately 30 years and one of them for 7 years, of which two years as an unqualified substitute teacher. One of the teachers was a qualified English and German teacher teaching only language classes in primary school, but the rest of the teachers were class teachers, teaching all subjects. Class teachers were teaching early English in almost all of the schools which I contacted for the study. This confirms that mostly class teachers are teaching early English in primary schools.

Table 1. Background of the interviewed teachers

	<i>Gender</i>	<i>Teaching experience</i>	<i>Education background</i>
Teacher 1	Female	30 years as a class teacher	Class teacher
Teacher 2	Female	15 years in pre-primary school, 2 years as a class teacher	Originally kindergarten teacher, educated further to class teacher
Teacher 3	Male	10 years in pre-primary school, 5 years as a class teacher	Originally kindergarten teacher, educated further to class teacher
Teacher 4	Female	30 years as a class teacher	Class teacher
Teacher 5	Female	5 years as a language teacher in primary school	Language teacher
Teacher 6	Female	7 years as a class teacher	Class teacher

4.4 Data analysis: Content analysis

How to analyse the data needs to be kept in mind already when designing interviews as it affects the nature of deconstructing the interviews (Hirsjärvi and Hurme 2015: 135). The interviews were theme interviews, which pointed towards theme-based data analysis method. Qualitative Content Analysis (QCA) suited this purpose. As the data consisted of interviews, it required interpretation. According to Schreier (2012: 3), QCA aims to systematically describe the meaning of the collected material, which can be seen, heard or written. My aim for this study was to get the teachers' voices heard and to allow them to express their thoughts about the research issue, which is what QCA also aims at.

The key concept in QCA is to translate all the meanings that relate to your study into categories of a coding frame and then classify any subsequent parts of the material according to those categories (Schreier 2012: 5). Three important features (Schreier 2012: 6-8) are highlighted: it is 1) systematic, which means that the analysing process needs to be reliable, not leaving anything out nor holding to an individual understanding but aiming to go beyond that, 2) flexible, meaning that the coding frame needs to always be tailored according to the coding frame, which depends on your material, and 3) it reduces data, ie. focuses on selected aspects that fit the purpose of the study and the analysis. The coding categories represent the concepts in the research questions and translated meanings offer deeper understanding of the implication of these meanings. Tuomi and Sarajärvi (2018: 104) have compiled three ground rules for QCA - categorise, thematize and classify. The analysis needs to only consist of the matters that are relevant for the study. This can be viewed as a challenge for the examiner, as the decision of what is and is not relevant can be divergent.

QCA is usually executed either inductively, driving straight from the data, or deductively, following a theory when carrying out the analysis (Tuomi and Sarajärvi 2018: 103). For the purpose of this study, the data was analysed following data-driven content analysis. In this model the analysed units are not decided beforehand but chosen to suit the research issue and the purpose of the study (Tuomi and Sarajärvi 2018: 108). For the analysis, the data was transcribed using a rough transcription model. Since the interest was in the meanings and entities, very detailed transcription was not necessary. Thus, pauses, fillers, intonation and other small details that were not relevant for the purpose of the study were left out. Emotional expressions, such as laughter or irritation were included in the transcription as they strongly relate to the feelings that the interviewees had on those particular issues. The total length of the transcribed data was 67 pages.

The data was read multiple times, first to get an overview on the themes and then to identify the different themes. With each reading the themes became more clear and easier to classify. The themes were based on the interview questions to some extent but new, more focused themes also appeared with each reading. As is typical for data-driven content analysis (Tuomi and Sarajärvi 2018: 108), the analyzed units were chosen based on the purpose and aim of this study and all the prejudices and expectations were left out. Processing the data was executed by following the basic model for data-driven content analysis by Tuomi and Sarajärvi (2018: 122).

First, the data was reduced to an extent that was relevant for the study. This meant that all the topics that were not related to the research questions and/or interview questions were left out. Second, the data was clustered. Similar expressions and phrases were combined into own groups and thus the themes were able to be identified. Third, the data was abstracted, which according to Tuomi and Sarajärvi (2018: 127) enables the analyst to form theoretical concepts from the selected information. This allowed the base for the conclusion and discussion to be built. The themes will be presented in the next section where the findings of this study will be revealed.

5 TEACHERS' READINESS AND PERCEPTIONS ON ELL

Based on the research questions, four main categories were separated from the research data. The purpose of these categories is to summarise the findings from the interviews and clarify the contents into subsections. These sections include 5.1 Perceptions of early language learning and teaching, 5.2 Materials supporting early language teaching, 5.3 Teacher education and 5.4 Teachers' readiness to teach early English. The division of the subsections under these four main categories can be seen from the table below:

Table 2. Categories based on data

MAIN CATEGORIES	Perceptions of early language learning and teaching	Materials supporting early language teaching	Teacher education	Teachers' readiness to teach early English
	The role of ELL		In-service education	Support
SUB-CATEGORIES	The goals of ELL		Pre-service education	Who should teach early English
	Important features in ELL			Teachers' own readiness
	Teacher's role in ELL			

The main categories are all related to the research questions, whereas the subcategories mainly emerged from the data and were mostly related to the interview outline. Teachers' readiness will be evaluated case by case, drawing on their previously mentioned examples and ideals. More extensive evaluation of the study and conclusions that can be drawn from it will be discussed in section 6.

5.1 Perceptions of early language learning and teaching

This chapter will provide the results related to the first research question *How do the teachers taking part in this study perceive Early Language Learning (ELL)?* The results have been divided into four main categories according to the themes risen from the interviews: the role of

ELL, the goals of ELL, important features in ELL and teacher's role in ELL. Based on the interviews, the teachers mainly recognize the role and importance of ELL, but the ways in which it is realized in the classrooms varied. Age seems to stand as a key factor in the differing opinions about the role of ELL in class.

5.1.1 The role of ELL

Based on the interviews, the teachers recognized the importance of ELL and its place in the core curriculum. 5 out of 6 teachers regarded ELL as a great addition to the early years of schooling. They felt that the young children's potential needs to be utilized and that its nature fits to the primary teaching, as ELL is mostly portrayed as a light, fun and active way of learning. This can be seen in examples 1 and 2.

(1) I see it [ELL] as quite important, I see it as a good thing and I think that it has a lot of learning potential which might not have been utilized when it [learning English] has begun during third grade so it is useful and also reasonable (Teacher 3)

(2) Yes I think that languages are very important and since they can be included so naturally into teaching it feels somehow foolish like why have they not been utilized before because it flows almost by itself and they learn it unintentionally so that they might not even realize (Teacher 6)

As the examples show, the teachers have put thought into early language learning and the way they want to utilize it in their own classrooms and teaching. The majority (5/6) of the teachers being enthusiastic and very positive about ELL, it seems the whole initiative has gained positive ground within schools. Also, as the examples above show, the teachers seem to have knowledge about the importance of ELL as they both mention that there has been a great deal of learning potential that has not been utilized to its full extent when language learning has begun later.

Even though the majority of the teachers regarded ELL and the current amendment as a good thing, there was also a controversial viewpoint on this. Teacher 4 did not think that learning languages was necessary already during the first year of primary school, as she was afraid that it would get too heavy for the children and also take space from other important subjects. As example 3 shows, she felt that it would be more important to root the skills that are needed at school in Finnish and not mix English, or any other foreign language into it.

(3) Yes it is important but I don't see it as a must here at first grade already, I think that the previous decision to begin learning languages at second grade would have been enough ...

I think that it would be more important in the first grade to root the school skills in Finnish so based on this experience I feel like it would have been enough to begin at second grade so that there's not too much everything even though I guess they have learned something during preschool already since they know colours weekdays and some stuff but I wouldn't had promoted this (Teacher 4)

The controversy in this comes from the clear notion that the children already know some English from preschool but that mixing it with their mother tongue would hinder their learning in Finnish. This was discussed in section 2.1, and as Johnstone (2002: 12) argues, earlier start is actually beneficial for children's literacy skills and reduces the gap between the first language and the second language. This points towards better learning results in the future including both the first language and the foreign language. Judging by this, the more English could be implemented into the first years of primary school, the better. This would need to be done in a way that children became interested in learning languages and learning was kept fun. All of the teachers interviewed for this study thought of ELL as something fun to teach and also to learn, as one of the teachers concluded in example 4:

(4) Yes it differs from other subjects in a good way from their [pupils'] perspective when they get to do and play more than in some other classes (Teacher 2)

Two of the teachers mentioned sensitive period (see section 2.1) in examples 5 and 6 as a reason for ELL to have grounded its place in primary school. The sensitive period was not commonly familiar to all teachers, and this notion pointed towards these teachers' own interest and willingness to develop their own understanding over early language teaching.

(5) Well I'd think that there's this sensitive period which is a good time to learn and memorize words, it is noticeable especially during the first years of primary school that the inbuilt motivation to like suck in all the information is huge so it must be very favourable time to learn languages too (Teacher 6)

(6) There's the sensitive period and it is quite natural to begin as you can really tell at this time that the benefits are indisputable so it is absolutely a good thing (Teacher 5)

These two teachers were very language oriented themselves (Teacher 5 was the only language teacher to take part in this study and Teacher 6 had taught ELL before, regarding it as a great thing), which can be interpreted from their other answers, too. This points to the direction of education and the role of ELL in there, as well as to the qualities of a teacher. As mentioned in the ELLiE study (2011, see section 2.3), teachers can bring several influential factors together and thus benefit the children's learning. Noticing the sensitive period, which was also used to

motivate the current amendment in the first place, indicates that the teachers are aware of the importance of it and want to benefit from it in their own teaching.

Furthermore, pupils' excitement was noticed as a result of ELL already at the early stage of this new amendment. This was thought to be a result of the children's natural ability to be curious and wanting to learn new things, and the teachers thought of preserving this excitement as of one of the most valuable things a teacher can achieve. All of the teachers agreed on the pupils' growing interest towards ELL and five out of the six teachers thought of it as a very positive phenomenon, which can be seen in examples 7 and 8:

(7) I've noticed that the children themselves are very excited they were so excited now at the first grade that English begins now and they have been praising it a lot so they really like the lessons (Teacher 2)

(8) The children are excited and think positively as a child who begins school is usually very excited to learn new things so English fits fine there too in suitable portions (Teacher 3)

Teacher 4, who did not really think of ELL as something worth investing in also recognised the children's excitement but she was worried about the workload ELL was causing for the pupils. She was afraid of mixing languages together which she thought would hinder the learning processes (example 9), which was discussed and reasoned with above.

(9) The children are very excited and catch new words very easily but you need to be very careful there so that it doesn't become too heavy for them as many of the children have some difficulties with Finnish too when learning to read so English can not overrule it so that they don't get confused (Teacher 4)

Teachers' own excitement about ELL was also noticeable as examples 10 and 11 show, as four out of six teachers thought of it as quite natural part of their own teaching and were able to include shorter sessions throughout the day. This is something that was highlighted in the theory (see section 2.2), as shorter sessions more often with a playful grasp to it were indications of more positive results in the future. These shorter sections provided the children with more input and repetition, which helped them to get familiar with the language. Compared to only including one session per week, more repetition and input is recognised as more effective way to acquire the target language. However, these shorter sessions need to be carefully planned and fit the objectives of the core curriculum. This will be discussed in more details in section 6.

(10) I've enjoyed it a lot I think it's been very natural somehow to include in the days of primary teaching and also easy so it's been a part of our morning routines and for example songs or rhymes before lunch (Teacher 2)

(11) Teaching is renewed and there are always new changes coming and now it is this earlier teaching of languages so I think it's seen as a natural development and it hasn't caused any troubles in a way that I'd think that I must teach it [in a negative sense] no I don't see it that way at all I quite enjoy it (Teacher 3)

Moreover, ELL was seen as something that could really benefit the children in the future, since the teachers thought that it was something that the children enjoyed and that this enjoyment was also indicating for a better shift in attitudes in the long run. The fact that the children were excited about ELL also indicated that the teachers thought were mostly positive and that they were able to bring this enjoyment to their classrooms in forms of teaching methods and putting their own mind to it, which can be seen from example 12.

(12) I think it is so much fun as you can really get them [the children] to like English (Teacher 6)

As can be interpreted from the above quotations, ELL is mostly seen as a good add to the primary teaching and that teachers were happy to teach it, enjoying it also themselves. Most of the teachers (4/6) regarded ELL as light, easy to include throughout the day and were happy to plan these sessions as they felt that it was very beneficial for the children to get acquainted with the language. Some objections occurred mainly due to the lack of knowledge about the process of ELL and how it affects the children, which could be revised by providing teachers with more extensive possibilities for in-service training and also by reconsidering the role of languages in teacher training. These will be discussed more extensively in section 6.

5.1.2 The goals of ELL

The ultimate goal of ELL, according to all of the teachers, was improving Finnish people's language competence. Communicative competence, ie. the ability to communicate in English was especially brought up. The ability to speak English was seen as a necessity in today's global world, and the teachers recognized the role of early education in this. Communicative competence and the courage to use the language was seen to improve when language learning began at an early age, as children were noted to pick up new languages easily. This can be seen from examples 13 and 14.

(13) Well I assume that we believe that children will benefit from it and learn it easier and that their language competence will improve better when they begin (learning it) at an earlier age and that it will be of use in this globalising world (Teacher 3)

(14) This like Finnish people's language competence improves for sure and [they] get more courage especially to speak so surely the earlier you begin something the easier it gets to the children (Teacher 4)

Another important goal mentioned by every teacher was the positive orientation as well as rising interest and excitement towards languages. This was executed through singing, playing and other active strategies, as the teachers noted that keeping ELL sessions easy and fun was crucial in order to meet this goal, as examples 15 and 16 show. It was also supported in the ELLiE study (2011, see section 2.2), where one of the main guidelines provided was the need for age-fitting activities in order to get the children excited.

(15) Rising interest towards the language and making children learn the language through playing and singing like quite light so no workbooks since they learn quite a bit through singing and playing (Teacher 1)

(16) I think the goals are preserving the enthusiasm so it is mainly introducing and orientation to the case (Teacher 2)

Preserving positive attitudes was recognised by the majority (5/6) of the teachers and two of them mentioned it as the main goal of ELL. Keeping ELL sessions fun was noted to promote positive attitudes in the future, and allowing every pupil to feel successful in learning ELL was mentioned as something that could possibly prevent the future difficulties with motivation and thus learning abilities, as can be seen from examples 17 and 18. This has been confirmed by for example Jaekel et al (2017), who regard the main goal of ELL to be a long-term one, resulting in higher motivation in the later stages of education. Teachers, who successfully differentiate activities to suit the needs of all the children are simultaneously helping them with their future willingness to put effort into (language) learning.

(17) I believe that it is reasonable to utilize the learning potential as it could affect the attitudes towards language in a positive way and thus for example learning Swedish even if just one year earlier has done good at least what I've heard how excited the pupils have been so in that sense it is good for everyone (Teacher 3)

(18) I think it [the goal of ELL] is precisely the positive attitudes towards English and getting motivated from it and rising interest and excitement and I think that the main point is letting everyone improve in their own level so it's not like everyone should know this and this when entering the second grade but that there's this time to digest it all so when

they go to third grade the same things turn up and it's great for them to be able to feel like hey I know this (Teacher 6)

As discussed in the section 2.2, children tend to begin to learn languages (and any new skills) with an open, positive mindset, and when this mindset can be preserved the learning results in the future can also improve. ELL should be about building a base for the future learning, and this can be achieved through excitement and enjoyable learning sessions. This was widely recognized among the teacher interviewed for this study, and the overall notion was in line with what was also underlined in the various studies - the teacher's own attitude and the way they provided children with tasks that suits the pupils' level helped them to reach this goal.

Moreover, speaking skills and pronunciation were mentioned as an ELL goal by two of the teachers. They noted that learning English at an early stage was mainly through listening and speaking activities, and that writing and/or other more mechanical skills were to be introduced later. The children's excitement was seen to help them get courage to speak in a foreign language and children's natural skills to pick up languages was mentioned to improve their pronunciation. ELL was noted to be a great way to improve children's pronunciation, which can be seen from example 19.

(19) They get certainty to their speaking and their pronunciation gets also easier so you can already see like for example those who have begun [learning English] at first grade last year their pronunciation is really beautiful (Teacher 5)

All of the teachers also recognised the role of ELL in easing the learning process in the future. They mentioned that children who have begun to learn English at an early age would have acquired the basic skills by third grade which would help them with the more advancing materials and methods (see example 21). This was commonly thought to help with communication, too, as smaller children were mentioned to be able to communicate more easily without necessarily having to worry about whether or not they are making mistakes, as Teacher 1 describes in example 20.

(20) It eases learning English in the future and it might be that the future learning is easier for them so they get deeper [into the language] and are not shy about using the language in social situations so I think this might be good for daring to use language (Teacher 1)

(21) It probably lowers the threshold at third grade where there's so many other new things coming so English might feel like too much to swallow for those who are not so proficient

so for them it is nice that they already know some English vocabulary and other so it [the learning process] begins smoothly (Teacher 6)

As can be seen from the quotations, the teachers were greatly aware of the role and importance of ELL and also of the main goals of it. However, especially the older teachers were unhappy about the guidance and instructions provided from the upper levels, such as the city as their employer and the Finnish National Agency for Education. They felt that setting the goals and also reaching them was left entirely to the teachers themselves and that the necessary practical guidelines were missing. This put pressure on the teaching process, as mentioned by two of the teachers which can be seen from example 22.

(22) There are still no clear goals or guidelines in the core curriculum so we have quite our own curricula ... No [the school] does not really support us so we have to find everything ourselves (Teacher 4)

Even though the guidance was somewhat missing, the teachers were still able to find the important features of ELL and had the basic understanding of the principles of ELL. As the examples demonstrate, the teachers are aware of the main goals of ELL and do think that their own teaching style should match these goals. 4 out of 6 teachers were greatly aware of the effect of continuous exposure and frequent activities in the target language and were also including these types of activities in their everyday learning. Most of the teacher recognised the role of early exposure also in the later stages, and only the teachers closest to retirement age (Teachers 1 and 4) did not think that English was necessarily “worth all the fuss” and that less exposure would also be enough. In the next chapter, early language learning principles will be reported in more detail and the important features in ELL, as seen by the teachers, discussed.

5.1.3 Important features in ELL

Active learning strategies were repeatedly mentioned by all of the teachers as the most important feature in early English classes/sessions. These strategies included playing, singing, drama and bodily functions such as combining a movement with a word. This was thought to keep up the children’s focus and positive standpoint towards English. All of the teachers recognised the role of the children as active participants who need to be included in the activities in various ways, which is shown in examples 23 and 24.

(23) Playfulness and keeping it active so that the children can move and do and keeping it interesting so it is versatile and fun (Teacher 5)

(24) The main focus should be in playing and in language shower -type of activities ... and bodily functions so if there are songs where you can include movements then of course combine them (Teacher 6)

This was something that Edelenbos et al (2006, see section 2.2) underlined in their report. Young children need to be taught in a way that provides them with an opportunity to utilize all their senses in the learning process. Active learning was mentioned as the base for this - young children need to be provided with opportunities to move and to actively participate in the tasks. This seems to be widely recognized among primary school teachers, and the teachers interviewed for this study all shared this same ideal. Moreover, diverse methods were also mentioned by four of the teachers, and they gave examples such as incorporating technology (ipads, computers, smartboards), using different types of activities within same lesson (singing, playing, perhaps some written activities) and activating the group in multisensory style. The children were seen to lose interest in learning foreign languages if the methods were one-sided and did not meet the requirements of the cognitive levels of young children. This is shown in example 25:

(25) I see it very important that the methods would meet the level and demands of the children and that the children would learn not only languages but also the positive attitude towards language learning as it affects positively in the later attitudes and self-image of themselves as learners and thus it would bring them confidence like I can do this and in that way help them achieve higher results and better language competence (Teacher 3)

This has also been verified in longitudinal studies, as for example in the ELLiE study (2011). When children, or any learners for that matter, are not provided with learning opportunities that meet their own level, they will most likely lose the interest towards learning languages. This is something that teachers need to recognize, as it should serve as a guideline to all of their teaching practices. It is not only tied to learning languages but to all learning, no matter what the subject is. Children and their natural desire to learn (see section 2.1) are perhaps the most important link towards better future learning results, and this cannot be left unnoticed. As Jaekel (2017:11, see section 2.2) state, children's cognitive levels should remain in the main focus in ELL.

Another point that was raised by three of the teachers was consistency in teaching and repetition. The teachers felt that teaching and the activities must be consistent in order for the children to

be able to benefit from them, which is shown in example 26. This is why some of the teachers were also wishing for more guidance and/or material, as they felt that without any clear guidance their teaching was not coherent enough and they were not sure what to include or exclude when it came to early English. This might be caused from the lack of competence in English or the lack of proper training. Moreover, the age factor might have played its role in this, since the two teachers who felt that they were not able to properly arrange teaching without any guidance were the ones who had been teaching for 30 years. Thus, regular in-service training would be very much needed in order to keep the teacher' skills up to date.

(26) Yes it must be somehow consistent so it's not like a chaos one thing from here the other one from there but like that there were continuous repetition for example colours so they are not brought up just once but instead repeated throughout the year in different situations as it cannot stick to anyone's mind from the first hearing (Teacher 4)

Repetition was seen to automatize the expressions and also increase the children's basic vocabulary (see example 27), that was seen as one of the goals in early English teaching. This was tested and confirmed by Saunders-Semonsky and Spielberger (2004, see chapter 2.2), who found that regular, frequent assessment was one of the key factors in successful ELL.

(27) Repetition so when these things are included in the daily routines they are constantly repeated and then they begin to automatize and little by little their vocabulary will grow (Teacher 2)

Even though the importance of repetition and including English in the daily routines was recognized by the majority of the teachers, it was not all who actually implemented English in the daily routines. The actual practice was lacking, which can be caused from the lack of knowledge over the importance of regular instruction or from the lack of tools to execute it. Nevertheless, this would also need to be introduced in in-service training, which will be discussed more in chapter 6.

Furthermore, positive atmosphere in the English classes/sessions and maintaining it was recognized by all of the teachers. One of the main principles in early English teaching was seen to be raising interest towards English and/or languages and maintaining this excitement throughout the first years of language learning. This was believed to be achieved through various activities, active learning strategies and the teachers' own positive attitude towards languages. This has been also confirmed in previous research, as for example Jaekel et al (2017:

12, see chapter 2.2) argue the main goal of ELL being rising interest and excitement which results in sustaining a high level of motivation also in the future. One of the teachers highlighted the importance of not comparing pupils to one another in terms of preserving motivation and joy towards learning languages, which is seen in example 28.

(28) Mostly raising interest in them and not like tests or anything but that the atmosphere was positive that is really important and not comparing the children like this knows more than this one it must not be highlighted in any way (Teacher 1)

All the teachers mentioned also that learning English should be fun and that the children's motivation would remain high if learning was made fun. Knowing the pupils and their preferences as well as the group dynamics was regarded important in this. The teacher was expected to have an eye for the activities that were not popular and not only drive their own agenda through, which is noted in example 29.

(29) I always see what kind of activities they get excited from and then milk everything out of it as long as they still have motivation so that something that they don't enjoy doing was not pushed for them like this vocabulary needs to be gone through no matter the cost no but instead I don't care if we wear out the song that they like (Teacher 6)

In order to maintain motivation and excitement the tasks were seen having to be easy enough for the children (see example 30). It was believed that the tasks and the vocabulary should be close to the children's own life in order for them to get excited from them. Too difficult tasks were seen to demotivate the children and hinder their learning process. This was in line with what previous research has found (see chapter 2.2: Jaekel et al 2017; Enever 2015) on the task levels matching the children's cognitive levels. A task that is too hard to comprehend is a factor that contributes to the loss of motivation and possible problems with learning in the later stages.

(30) The tasks cannot be too difficult so they must somehow be linked to the children's daily life so easy things in English (Teacher 4)

All of the teachers mentioned active learning and various, fun and light activities as the main principles of ELL, which has been confirmed by for example _ and _. The children's cognitive levels were especially mentioned by two teachers (1 and 4) as they emphasized the importance of keeping the language easy for the children to be able to comprehend it. However, keeping language easy should not mean simplifying it too much, as would narrow the input the children receive considerably. This has a great deal to do with the teacher's language competence and

willingness to communicate in a foreign language, which is noted in the next section. Moreover, the role of the teacher in maintaining children's excitement and motivation was recognized by all of the teachers, and they all felt that teachers played a great role in the children's lives in their first years of school. This will be discussed more in the next section.

5.1.4 Teacher's role in ELL

The teacher is noted to be a major influence to the children in their first years of school and language learning (Enever 2014: 231, see section 2.3). This was also recognized by the teachers in the interviews. Primary school teacher's role was seen especially important in the first years of primary school, when the teacher serves as a role model for the children. This was also noted in relation to ELL and the teachers and their possibilities to encourage children and help them with their beginning language learning process was seen important, as is shown in example 31.

(31) Well yes the first grade teacher is important for them and what teacher says sticks to their mind as they are only in the beginning of their learning process these children so they should be encouraged a lot (Teacher 1)

The teacher's nature was also noted to be crucial in order to be able to interact with the children in a way that was seen necessary at primary level. This meant outgoing, empathic and willing to put themselves out there in different activities and tasks in order to be portrayed as role models for the young children. It was also noted by one of the teachers (see example 32) that teaching in a primary school was not the job for everyone but that it required certain nature and attitude.

(32) Yes you have to be able to put yourself out there and make fun of yourself and have that kind of touch to working with kids so you participate in the activities yourself too (Teacher 5)

The teachers' language skills were also mentioned by the teachers as a necessary quality to ELL teachers. However, a deeper understanding of the language was not required, according to some (2/6) of the class teachers. They felt that as long as the teacher is able to communicate in English and is quite confident with his/her own language use they would do fine with the early English classes. The rest of the teachers felt that some language pedagogy was also necessary and that the teachers themselves should be interested about languages to at least some extent in order to be willing to improve their own competence. The ability to speak foreign languages and interact

naturally with them was also noted to be an important one, as the teachers' own attitude towards languages was mentioned to affect the children. This can be seen in example 33:

(33) Yes it is required that the role is somewhat natural for the teacher as I think that if it was difficult for him/her to speak English then they wouldn't use it at all ... it [willingness to teach ELL] depends a lot on the teacher's own excitement and their relationship with English (Teacher 2)

Moreover, even though the teachers' own language skills were viewed as important for ELL, it was noted that the teacher should not be concerned with the children's pronunciation. The teacher was expected to be able to pronounce English correctly, but it was also mentioned that the different ways of pronunciation (i.e. different accents) were to be accepted, too. However, the teacher should not concentrate on correcting the pupils in their early years of language learning but to encourage them to use the language, as can be seen in example 34. This was something that was criticised related to the jolly phonics training that was offered for all the early English teachers in Central Finland, which will be discussed in the section 5.3.1.

(34) I thought to myself in the Jolly Phonics training that since there are so many ways to pronounce English I think that we should just encourage [the children] to use the language and not grasp to how they pronounce it if there are no like dramatical mistakes but like I think that the teacher should know how to pronounce correctly but that we should not make a number out of the pupils' pronunciation (Teacher 6)

Some negative experiences about the teachers' ability to speak English were also mentioned by one of the teachers. She had been teaching in another area for a year before returning to Central Finland, and in the school she had been teaching at the teachers' language competence was not on a level she felt that would have been necessary. She was afraid that early language teaching was not properly executed there (see example 35) as the teachers had been offered no in-service training nor were they willing to improve their own skills in their freetime. She was worried that the children would not get a right picture of ELL and that it would affect their later language learning, too.

(35) So there I was thinking that how is this [proper ELL] even realised here as I was under the impression that they don't even know English themselves (Teacher 6)

The teacher's worries were in line with the previous research done on the teachers' own language abilities in relation to their pupils' learning scores (see for example Graham 2017; De Bot 2014). Frequent exposure to the target language is considered to be one of the key factors

in successful ELL, and this can hardly be achieved if a teacher is not capable to fully communicate in English. Moreover, the quantity itself is not enough to achieve the expected results, the quality of exposure plays a key role in it, too. It is dependent on the teachers' own language skills as well as on the ability to understand the language, which puts the spotlight to the teachers and their training. The teachers who are and will be teaching ELL need to have sufficient skills in the target language themselves and need to be offered adequate training to improve their own ability. This will be discussed in more detail in the section 6.

Furthermore, a key quality of an early English teacher according to the interviewed teachers was the ability to get the pupils excited about the activities. The teacher's role was mentioned to be a positive encourager and it was required that the teachers were also willing to put themselves out there in the activities, trying to meet the children's level themselves. One teacher indicated that the teachers' knowledge about the children and what would work for them was crucial for succeeding in exciting the children, as seen in example 36.

(36) It's so lovely here [teaching first graders] as the children are so excited about everything so you just have to be willing to put yourself out there and say that hey we're going to play parrots so they immediately take part so that's where the teacher's role is visible you have to know how to excite them and what works for them (Teacher 5)

Another teacher commented on the importance of the teachers being enthusiastic about their work. Early English was noted to be as any other subject, and when the teacher was excited about that subject and their work it would have an impact on the children's excitement and getting them to participate. This was widely recognized among the interviewed teachers, as seen in example 37, as the teacher's nature was seen to play a major role in primary school teaching and in managing the work.

(37) [Teacher's role is to be] a positive encourager and bring different things and different ways and strategies to learn so that they are enthusiastic about their work and then the same principles can be applied as in PE or maths or any other subject so that you get the small children excited and participating in the activities (Teacher 3)

Additionally, it was also noted that teacher's personality was not enough to get the pupils excited about language learning, but that the teachers would also need to be excited about the language (and any subject for that matter) in order to best influence the children's enthusiasm (see example 38). This suggests the need for adequate in-service training to give the teachers the tools and ways to vary their own methods and thus best benefit the children.

(38) The teacher's role is obviously being interested and invigorating and able to utilize the tools which would get the pupils excited so pedagogy needs to be involved and also interest towards the language and the ways in which it could be varied in teaching and working methods (Teacher 3)

Courage to speak the foreign language was also mentioned by all of the teachers as one of the key teacher characteristics in early language teaching. The teacher must be willing to express him/herself in English and thus be a role model to the small children. Teachers 1 and 4 emphasized especially that teachers must also be brave when it comes to speaking foreign languages so that they are not afraid of making mistakes, as can be seen from example 39. This might relate to them not regarding their own language competence completely fluent. However, it also needs to be recognized that teachers and the way they treat the language sends a message to the children who are in the beginning of their learning process. This message should be an encouraging one.

(39) Similarly it [the teacher's own communication] should be brave so that they don't need to be afraid of not being perfect so [the pupils] can see that a teacher can make mistakes too (Teacher 4)

Moreover, one of the teachers also pointed out that ELL should give the pupils an experience of the language use and make them see it as something natural, so that they would not have to worry about the correct forms but instead had the courage to communicate in English. This is seen below in the example 40. This indicates that the teachers want to be able to give their pupils the tools to improve their language competence and also to lower the threshold of being able to express yourself in a foreign language, without feeling that you are too afraid of the mistakes to speak.

(40) [The teacher] gives them an experience of the language so that there are no great goals but that it could be just a normal thing to speak English ... bringing positivity so that you don't have to be afraid of the foreign language but that you can be brave and say these simple words and sentences just like that so the playfulness and not too serious (Teacher 4)

Based on the answers, most of the teachers seem aware of their own role as ELL teachers and the effect on their pupils. The teachers recognized the importance of their own attitude and nature and as the examples show, most of them were also very much interested on language learning process themselves. Teachers 1 and 4, who had been teaching for the longest, being close to retirement age, and who were most insecure about their own language skills were also

the ones who did not underline the teacher's own language competence as a requirement for successful ELL. Teacher 6 had had similar experiences in her previous school where the class teachers' language skills were not in a level that would allow them to organize ELL classes in a way that would benefit the children. Thus, it can be interpreted that the teacher's own language skills play a major role in succeeding in ELL in the first few years of primary school, as the majority (4/6) of the interviewed teachers also recognized. This has been confirmed by for example Graham (2017) and Enever (2014, see section 2.3). Teachers nature and attitude affect their teaching and thus the children, and ELL teachers' language skills need to be on a certain level in order to meet the demands of the current amendment.

5.2 Materials supporting early language teaching

This section seeks to provide answers to the third research question *Do the teachers feel that they have been provided with adequate training and tools in order to meet the needs of the children (regarding ELL)?* The teachers were asked whether they feel like the materials they have been provided with help them to arrange ELL in a way that would best benefit the children. There were controversial ideas about the laboriousness of early English as a subject, mainly due differing opinions about whether a workbook was necessary for ELL classes or not. Teachers own background as well as their age/teaching experience was a key factor in determining their opinions about this.

Teachers 1 and 4 wished for more ready-made materials. They both felt that searching for material required more effort and that it was too laborious for them, as examples 41 and 42 show. They also felt that without material their teaching was lacking the consistency and that neither were they provided with other tools that would help them to organize their teaching.

(41) I might be such an old teacher that I miss the material and would want to include more book as it feels like that this what I'm teaching right now is like experiment and more like a chaos things from here and there so I would need to have some kind of framework like what kinds of things would need to be taught during the first grade so it would ease my own work (Teacher 1)

(42) Material is pretty weak or there is none except for if you search for it yourself so you have to be really active if you want some pictures or songs or something like that you have to assemble it yourself (Teacher 4)

Mainly due to the lack of material, teacher 4 felt that early English was the most laborious subject that she was teaching. She explained that it took her a long time to find suitable materials from the internet and that it was bothering her that there are no ready materials for classroom use as there are in other subjects. She compared early English classes to the English classes in later stages of primary school and felt that it was almost unfair that she had to look for the materials herself, as it caused a great deal of extra work for her. This can be seen from the example 43:

(43) Absolutely this is the most laborious subject as you have nothing you have to search for everything yourself as you don't have any books ... so that I wouldn't have to look for it that I had the material packages where different topics would be arranged into groups just like they are from third grade onwards they proceed similarly [following the book] so that I wouldn't have to dig up everything from the internet (Teacher 4)

As Teacher 1 mentioned in example 41, these reactions could be explained due to the fact that both of the teachers had been teaching for longest, meaning that they had graduated from class teacher education already in the 80's and received the knowledge back then which they were still applying. This would mean that they were lacking the skills that were necessary for teaching without a book. Even though both of them had received in-service training and they were also familiar with information technology as part of teaching practice, it was not as natural for them as it was for the younger teachers who had either attended class teacher training later and thus received up-to-date education, or grown up in this era of IT and social media. This could explain the extra work that they felt they had to put in, as they were used to following the books and arranging their teaching based on them.

The rest of the teachers did not see the lack of materials as a problem for them, as the examples 44 and 45 show. They felt that materials could be easily found and that there were loads of material to choose from on the internet. They also felt that early English classes were so active and fun that the materials were also inspiring, and as Teacher 3 mentioned, looking for them was also quite fun. The laboriousness of a teacher's work was seen to result from other things, such as big group sizes and the lack of resources.

(44) Even though this is a new thing it's not laborious per se as the contents and stuff you don't have to put that much effort into it so in that sense I don't feel like this is laborious but on the contrary I think it's quite fun. The laboriousness in class teacher position comes from other things (Teacher 3)

(45) I don't see it as a problem as the internet is full of different songs and games and other stuff. I know what to look for and what type of activities work so I don't think of it as laborious at all (Teacher 5)

The differing opinions about the laboriousness of the early English classes and the controversial stands on material seem to be related to the teachers' background and training, as well as their age. As argued above, older teachers who have been teaching for decades seem to strongly rely on the teaching materials and when they are missing, they feel that the classes lack in structure. Younger teachers, on the other hand, have been encouraged to work without books and to come up with their own materials, and thus they do not see the lack of materials as a problem. Moreover, teachers 2 and 3 are originally kindergarten teachers and both of them mentioned having lots of games, rhymes and other early childhood education materials from their previous education. These types of activities are easily transferred into early English classes, too, and this would help them with the planning of these classes.

Additionally, teachers 2 and 6 mentioned that not having any books in ELL could also be a positive thing. As example 46 shows, teacher 2 mentions that the ELL materials that are available for schools to purchase are quite boring and not as inspiring and fun as the materials that are available online. She feels that young children would not benefit from this type of material as they would probably not get excited about it.

(46) It's kind of good thing that there are no materials as we have this one online material but I haven't used it almost at all since I think it's quite dull so at least with first graders I wouldn't use it I think it's better to keep [the teaching] off the books (Teacher 2)

Teacher 6 also believes that the books would begin to guide the lessons too much if they had been introduced from the beginning and that the teachers would start to rely mainly on the books, as can be seen from example 47. She feels that this would be a waste of money, if schools invested great amount on ELL materials that were not to be used as extensively as hoped, or that on the other hand teachers would feel obligated to use the books when they had already been paid for.

(47) Well it's not worth even introducing the books as then it begins to guide the teaching too much and then it's a pity that those expensive books would not be used since you want to teach on the children's terms because the main focus should be in playing and in like language shower type of activities so I'm perfectly able to find my own material then (Teacher 6)

These opinions relate strongly to the child-based teaching and learning where the activities are based on the children's ability to process and designed to fit the needs of young children. This is in line with previous research conducted on the type of ELL that seems to benefit the children best. As the ELLiE report (2011) shows, successful ELL should rely on implicit strategies and communication and the books and other written materials were to be introduced later. Obviously, some kind of support for the teachers who feel that ELL requires too much of them is required, and materials such as teacher guides and playbooks would fit this purpose. This will be discussed more in section 6.

Another important notion that was emphasized by teacher 3 (see example 48) was the need for cooperation between teachers. As ELL materials are not extensively available (yet, at least), the cooperation between teachers becomes essential. This means sharing materials that have been noticed to be helpful, sharing ideas and also utilizing the expertise of the language teachers in schools. Communication and cooperation between different schools within same areas would also be helpful, especially in cases when class teachers are obligated to teach early English regardless of their own language competence.

(48) As there are not materials so the cooperation [between teachers] would be in key position (Teacher 3)

Based on these extracts, teachers' education, their own language competence and their age seem to be the most considerable factors in whether ELL materials are needed or not. Adequate support needs to be provided to the teachers nonetheless, regardless of their competence or teaching methods. Cross-school cooperation could appear useful in this. The expertise of the language teachers in schools needs to also be utilized and the teacher-guides that they have could be shared to at least some extent to the class teachers teaching ELL, too. These matters will be evaluated in more depth in section 6.

5.3 Teacher education

This section seeks to provide answers to the second research question, *Do the teachers feel that they have been provided with adequate **training** and tools in order to meet the needs of the children (regarding ELL)?* The teachers were asked about their pre-service training, ie. teacher education, and about the in-service training they had been provided with. All of the teachers had participated to the training provided for all teachers participating in the Key Project (see

section 3.2) but the benefit they received from it varied. Section 5.3.1 deals with this issue as well as the wishes and experiences about relevant in-service training, and in section 5.3.2 the teachers' previous teacher education is discussed.

5.3.1 In-service education

All of the teachers participating in the Key Project (ie. teaching early English to first graders during the academic year 2018-2019) had been provided with specific in-service training targeted for early language educators. The training was a part of Jolly Phonics programme, which is a language teaching programme established by Chris Jolly in 1987 (Jolly Phonics 2018). The aim of the programme is to teach English to children using synthetic phonics. This is, according to the establishers, regarded as one of the most effective ways to teach languages. It leans on the phonological system of English and the main target is to teach children letter sounds in contrast to the alphabet (Jolly Phonics 2018). This particular form of teaching early English was regarded useful and in a positive light by two of the six teachers, as examples 49 and 50 show:

(49) Not everyone experienced it as a style that they want to include in their teaching but I have liked it ... I like what I've gotten from the training this like a phone and then a movement to it and these materials as I feel like they're something the children enjoy (Teacher 2)

(50) I'm grateful for the city about these trainings and that we have been allowed to participate in them so that they have been provided as like I have been able to get something out of them and utilize the things in my own teaching to at least some extent (Teacher 5)

The rest of the teachers (4/6) did not regard Jolly Phonics as something they would actively use in their own teaching, as most of them (3/6) did not feel that this specific, phonology-based type of teaching would fit to the needs of first graders. The teachers also thought that the jolly phonics training was not practical enough and that they did not get the tools that they would have preferred for the real-life teaching. This is shown in the examples 51 and 52:

(51) Well no it does not [fit my teaching] since I thin that it [phonetics] is not the most important thing I think what's most important is that we start off of the surrounding world with the children and what they know about it in real life and not any schwa-sound I wouldn't stick to it not at all so to my mind the approach was not the best (Teacher 3)

(52) What the training has to offer did not somehow match what I had expected like more concrete help and the training stems from phonetics so like phonology based and not for example from word groups like now we learn the days of the week and colours but like a

phoneme and in what kind of words it appears so to my mind it does not fit first graders (Teacher 4)

Additionally, one teacher pointed out how Jolly Phonics style might not be suitable in the Finnish context, as it might promote wrong ideas in terms of pronunciation. She explained that Finnish people are often afraid to speak out if they are not completely sure about the pronunciation or grammar, and that shifting the focus into pronunciation and phonemes might not be the best possible way of teaching foreign languages, as can be seen from example 53:

(53) For Finnish people that pronunciation seems to be the prerequisite that if there's even the slightest possibility that you might say something wrong then you don't dare to say anything so when this Jolly Phonics concentrated mainly on pronunciation and phonemes so it kinda felt contradictory to me like how am I supposed to react to this (Teacher 6)

Based on these answers, most of the teachers do not feel that Jolly Phonics would fit into first grade English as they felt that teaching English should be more related into the actual life surrounding the children, so that it would be easier for them to get a grip of the language. Only one teacher was regularly introducing Jolly Phonics -based activities in her classroom and felt that the pupils enjoyed this concept too. The only language teacher (teacher 5) participating in this study had neutral reactions towards Jolly Phonics, she had not incorporated Jolly Phonics regularly into her classes but neither did she comment negatively about it. She felt that it could provide new ideas for language teaching and give a fresh outlook into it, which could be a factor related to her background from language teacher education. She is familiar with language pedagogy and different approaches to teach English, but as most of the class teachers are not, they are lacking the basic information about early language pedagogy and thus applying specific models without the basic understanding of the whole process might not feel natural for them. This could also explain the lack of interest towards Jolly Phonics from the class teacher side, as according to most of the class teachers (4/5) the basics of early language pedagogy would definitely need to be introduced first (see also section 5.1.4).

Teacher 6 had taught early English in two different areas as mentioned previously in section 5.1.4. She was thus able to compare the two different areas in terms of early English teaching, and felt that the situation in terms of teachers' readiness and provided in-service training was considerably better in Central Finland than in the area and school she had taught before. This is visible in the example 54:

(54) [In the other area] they began just like that without any training or anything so it was a bit like since the teachers who were close to retirement and who couldn't even find anything from Youtube so I have no idea what are they even doing in the [English] classes ... so here I was like yes and even a bit surprised as there [in the other area] everyone did it without any training and it's like everyday norm not even a pilot there (Teacher 6)

Areal differences and different schools seem to have an effect on the quantity and quality of in-service training that is being provided for teachers. This puts more weight on the schools and their staff, ie. the teachers themselves to demand proper training if it is otherwise not provided. However, as seen in example 54, the teachers in that specific school were not into language teaching and did not regard it as something worth investing for, which makes the situation difficult and hinders the pupils' learning processes. This could also cause learning difficulties during the later stages, if languages are not being properly introduced and the base built for future learning.

The teachers were also asked about the kind of training they feel they would best benefit from, and all of them mentioned concrete activities and tools that would directly help them organize early language teaching (see examples 55 and 56). It was their primary expectation from a successful training, and since Jolly Phonics training did not give them concrete activities other than phoneme-related ones, the teachers mostly felt that it did not serve them sufficiently.

(55) For example different active learning practices and actual practical tips especially now when this comes just like this so then you need those tools that you can apply straight away ... in-service training should give us those everyday tools and also some language pedagogy and didactic since it tends to be falling short here it relies mainly on the teacher's own excitement and interest (Teacher 3)

(56) Like concrete theme entities for example how you teach the days of the week colours animals so it would be easier for the child to comprehend that okay we're talking about animals now and some materials for that (Teacher 4)

Another wish that the teachers had for beneficial in-service training was cooperation between teachers, including class teachers and language teachers both sharing ideas for one another as example 57 shows. This would lessen the burden of a single teacher and allow the older teachers, who might not (as teachers 1 and 4 have indicated in this study) be as competent in finding teaching material and ideas online as younger teachers are, to get ideas and even ready-made materials from their colleagues. This could benefit the teaching remarkably, improving and equalizing the quality of it overall.

(57) The training could include communication between teachers so sharing ideas more as many teachers could get really good tips from there when teachers share different ideas together (Teacher 1)

Even though the situation in Central Finland seems to be quite good in terms of regular in-service training being provided, their quality and the benefit from them seems contradictory. Moreover, only one of the teachers (Teacher 2) had participated in both of the Jolly Phonic trainings available, and Teacher 3 had participated to another short training about early language teaching. Rest of the teachers had not taken part in any other training, even though they all had been provided with similar trainings. What prevented the teachers from participating from in-service training was mostly the nature of Jolly Phonics training as it was not seen as something worth investing for, and time related issues. The teachers knew about trainings, but felt that they were too stressed for time in order to participate in them, as can be seen from examples 58 and 59:

(58) Yes there are trainings provided for us but there's the lack of time as one could probably utilize our mutual sharing of ideas more but the weeks are mostly very hectic (Teacher 2)

(59) And this constant discussion about when (the trainings are organized) are they in the evenings are you able to get a substitute teacher so it should be invested in more than what our municipality has done (Teacher 3)

As pointed out in section 2.3, successful early language teacher were noted to regularly participate in in-service training, as Tragant Mestres and Lundberg (2011) reported as part of the ELLiE team. This puts pressure on the municipalities to provide adequate, beneficial in-service training for teachers especially when a new amendment is introduced. Moreover, these in-service trainings would need to be enabled for the teachers without assuming that they would give up their freetime in order to participate, ie. the schools should be provided with adequate budgets that they may recruit substitute teachers to cover for the teachers participating in these trainings. Alternatively, trainings could be included in the teachers' allocated work time, as is already the case in some areas. This will be discussed more extensively in section 6.

In addition to the suggestions above, Teacher 6 proposed tutor teachers as a solution for the constant need of in-service training and time issues related to it. The solution would be tutor teachers, meaning that each school should have a dedicated language teacher who would help other teachers to organize early language teaching in a way that would put together “the two

worlds”, language point of view but also the reality of the class teachers as can be seen from example 60. This tutor teacher would also be answering to any questions or concerns that the class teachers have about language and language teaching, and would thus shorten the gap between language teachers and class teachers. Thus, the need for continuous in-service training that is often difficult to arrange in a way that would benefit the majority of the teachers would decrease and class teachers would not need to feel that they are responsible for the early language introduction alone.

(60) You could think that in any subject in primary schools there should be a tutor teacher who would go round the schools and the teachers could consult her/him and think about the things that are important to know when the pupils move on to 7th grade so how these things could be approached already from early on so there the tutor would be very helpful either in a way that they would also participate in teaching or that you could consult them (Teacher 6)

Based on these answers, the situation in Central Finland seems good in terms of in-service training being provided for class teachers and language teachers equally, but especially class teachers with no English background would require more assistance regarding early language learning strategies and tools. As language pedagogy is not yet introduced in pre-service class teacher training, the new amendment calls for suitable in-service training for class teachers who might be uncertain about their own competence. This, too, will be elaborated further in section 6.

5.3.2 Pre-service education

The current situation in Finland in terms of class teacher education and subject teacher education differs in the amount of pedagogical studies. Class teacher students have pedagogy and education as their major, whereas subject teacher students major in the subject itself (language, mathematics, history and so on) and study pedagogy as their minor. Thus, language teachers become specialists in their major language, whereas class teacher students do not have any compulsory language courses other than academic English (3 ECTS) that focuses mainly on improving their academic language skills during a short course. Class teachers can, however, study languages as their minor and become competent language teachers too. This chapter will shed light on the results of the interviewed teachers’ experiences and thoughts about pre-service education and their own teacher education, and their ideas for improvement.

Teacher 1, who had over 30 years of experience as a class teacher was the only teacher who recognized the importance of English but did not think it should necessarily be introduced to class teacher programme extensively. She was afraid that it would take space from other important subjects in the curriculum and would instead prefer to increase the amount of for example handicrafts in order for them to gain more ground at schools, which can be seen from example 61.

(61) Well yes it is a part of this school world this language learning but then there is also so much more so it can't be emphasized only since there are many other subjects too and I'd say that in these days handicrafts are beginning to lose ground and are almost like underrated (Teacher 1)

Teachers 1 and 4 expressed similar ideas when asked about the importance of ELL, as they were both worried about English (or other foreign languages) taking the space from other subjects in the curriculum (see section 5.1), which is similar to the idea Teacher 1 suggests here. However, as the current amendment has been funded by the government (see section 3.2), it is not taking space from any other subject. These funds should be directed towards teacher education, too, in order to secure the quality of education for all primary school teachers. However, teachers 1 and 4 were also the ones closest to retirement age and had not been actively participating in any in-service training, which could have an effect on their slightly reserved attitudes towards ELL.

Rest of the teachers (5/6) strongly agreed on introducing English and/or other language studies and language pedagogy more extensively in class teacher education, as can be seen from examples 62 and 63. They commented on the changing nature of primary teachers' reality, recognizing English and other foreign languages as an increasing part of it (see also section 5.1.1). This would, according to them, also call for introduction of language studies into their pre-service education for them to be then able to teach the children in a way that would benefit them. Class teacher education was also criticised for reacting slowly to any changes that are happening in the "real world", as the teachers felt that the education needs to be able to better react to new amendments and bring the new information to the class and language teacher students, and any teacher students for that matter.

(62) Yes it needs to be involved just like any other subject in the class teacher studies so if it is being taught then it needs to be taught to the teachers too ... it [language studies] needs

to be included in more ways than just the compulsory English course so more like child-oriented viewpoint needs to be definitely involved (Teacher 2)

(63) Well yes absolutely [class teacher department] needs to react as the teachers' reality changes as you need to teach languages more and probably most teachers will teach it so it needs to be paid attention to like so many other changes which tend to come like in a way that it is last recognized in teacher training when they notice that world is changing (Teacher 3)

The teachers also regarded the need for language pedagogy as an essential add to teacher education. Even Teacher 4, despite of her previous, more reserved attitudes about ELL and its introduction to first graders in Finland, wanted to include language pedagogy to class teacher education as she felt that it would greatly improve her own capability to teach languages to small children. This was something that all of the class teachers wished for, except for Teacher 1. However, Teacher 1 had already decided not to continue teaching English during the next year but let her colleagues take over her English classes, which could have affected her opinions. This will be more extensively elaborated on section 5.4.3.

(64) When it comes like this that the language learning begins earlier it definitely needs to be included there [class teacher training] so the pedagogy and also how languages need to be taught because someone who doesn't specialise in languages might look at teaching differently than a language teacher and that needs to be somehow exposed to everyone because anyone might have to teach it (Teacher 4)

The difference of the two worlds - class teachers and language teachers - is clearly visible in the above example, and in order to deliver good quality language teaching to primary school children this gap between the two worlds needs to be reduced. One way of doing this is to include language pedagogy in the class teacher training and to teach the class teacher students the importance of early language exposure and its possible, and probable, positive effects on language learning during later stages as Edelenbos et al (2006) and Enever in the ELLiE study (2011) also argued. This could affect the class teachers' attitudes on languages in a positive manner and also create possibilities for cooperation between class teachers and language teachers.

Another way of bridging the gap is improving language teacher education. The need for language studies and language pedagogy is clearly expressed from the class teacher side, but improvements are also called for in language teacher education. The only language teacher participating in this study (Teacher 5) strongly criticized the current education for language teachers. She felt that language teacher education leaned too much on language studies and not

enough on pedagogy. She also criticized the department for the lack of concreteness in the studies and for the idea that teacher skills should be digested during one year of practice and common pedagogy, as the current model implies. Pedagogy should be more extensively included in subject teacher training and as Teacher 5 suggests in example 65, the common main ground for all subject teacher should be pedagogy, not the subject itself.

(65) Language teacher training or subject teacher training is organized in a way that you major only in one subject and become an expert in it and then during one year you study how to become a teacher and the the reality is something else so the basis in all teacher training should be the common major which would be pedagogy and then you could choose your own path which could be languages or mathematics or anything ... It's not a modern way of thinking that I will become a subject teacher and then I know everything about my own subject then you come here to primary school and everything else which is pretty much everything here then needs to be acquired like climbing a tree ass first ... Luckily we have such great cooperation here but probably if we had like a same ground it would be easier as you didn't have these two different worlds (Teacher 5)

As a future language teacher and current subject teacher student myself, I can strongly relate to this opinion. Languages, their structures and nuances are too often emphasized at the expense of pedagogy and education, whereas it should be the other way around. Pedagogy needs to come first, as it builds the base for all learning and students' motivation, and language should be included in relation to pedagogy. This would still mean that subject teacher students would become fluent specialists in their subjects, but they would most importantly become experts in pedagogy, which in its turn would help students with motivational problems, learning difficulties and so on. As Graham (2017) points out, sufficient pedagogy is vital for succeeding as a teacher, and this needs to be recognised in the department of languages, too.

Furthermore, both Teacher 2 and Teacher 3 regarded their background in early childhood education and as kindergarten teachers useful for early language teaching as example 66 shows. They were both very familiar with the early pedagogic principles and had games, plays and ideas for primary pupils' classes that could be easily transferred into English classes and language education. They were both familiar with teaching without a book and also had the tools for teaching and educating small children from their previous profession as early childhood specialists.

(66) when I have this early childhood education background so I have plenty of different plays and games and other ideas and also the touch to it so it eases and also relaxes thinking for its part (Teacher 3)

Early education background and many years of experience as kindergarten teachers have most probably affected these teachers' attitudes about early language learning and teaching and also prepared them for this current amendment, as they are both familiar with most of the early language teaching principles that for example Jaekel et al (2017: 7, see section 2.2) named: teaching implicitly, without a book or specific rules, including various playful activities, activating children through games, songs and other methods and implementing age-fitting methods. Thus, the need for materials is not as great for these early education background teachers as for those who are not familiar with games and songs as the primary source for learning. This could, for its part, also have an effect on their own excitement about teaching early English as they do not regard it as laborious, differing from the teachers with no such experience (see also section 5.2).

As the examples illustrate, the teachers' view on the current situation in teacher education department is that it needs improvements in order to fit the reality of a class teacher. Currently, the reality is that too many class teachers need to teach early English without sufficient skills and tools to do it, and this is where the universities need to develop their class teacher, and language teacher, programmes. Language learning cannot be left unnoticed, as it is the reality in all of the primary schools in Finland starting from spring 2020 onwards. English and other foreign languages need to be included in the class teacher studies and language teacher students should be offered with more possibilities to improve their pedagogical understanding and educational methods. This would also enhance cooperation between class teachers and subject teachers, as they would be sharing more common ground. This will be further discussed in section 6.

5.4 Teachers' readiness to teach early English

The final section of the results will be addressing the second research question *Do the teachers consider themselves able to arrange teaching in a way that benefits the children's language learning also in the future?* The section is divided to three subsections according to the coding frame of the data. First, support that teachers have received and support they would have needed will be discussed in section 5.4.1. Section 5.4.2 will focus on providing results to the question of who should teach early English based on the teachers' view on their own capability,

competence and general view on the issue. Finally, section 5.4.3 will look at each teacher as a case and provide insights on their readiness to teach early English to first graders.

5.4.1 Support

Most of the teachers (4/6) felt that they had received support to organize early language teaching from their school. Most often mentioned support came from the work community, co-workers (other class teachers and/or language teachers as well as special education teachers) playing the greatest part in it. School principals were also mentioned as the ones responsible for what is happening at schools and thus also affecting early language teaching and how it was promoted. Work community seemed to have a strong effect on how well the teachers were able to share their workload, since when cooperation worked well and seamlessly, the teachers were able to divide their workload between them as example 67 illustrates below. This was especially the case at the school where teachers 1 and 2 taught.

(67) The school supports really well so like I have received encouragement from vice principal ... Yes you get very much help [from the work community] we can discuss if someone feels like this English is more their thing then they get more of the classes and then I will take some other classes instead (Teacher 1)

When asked about the situations at schools in terms of ELL and why some of the teachers felt that their whole community worked well, good resources were mostly mentioned as the solution. The teachers thought of special education resources as one of the most important requirements, as the children with special education needs were otherwise taking too much space in the classrooms and thus getting most of the teacher's attention that other children would need, too. This need was not only limited to language classes, but present in every subject. As Teachers 1 and 2 mentioned (see example 68), having good resources in terms of enough support available for the children with special needs helped them organize language classes in a way that they preferred, too.

(68) It helps tremendously that we have good special education teachers and assistants ... of course there's always room for more resources too (Teacher 2)

The teachers who thought that the situation at school was good and/or had positive or neutral reactions to schools as a provider of support and resources were also the ones who had been asked whether they wanted to teach early English or not. This possibility to choose and the

feeling that you had the choice seems to have affected the organization of ELL classes positively, as all of the teachers that had the choice had mainly positive experiences about ELL and early English classes. Moreover, additional support was not necessarily needed, as Teacher 6 illustrated in example 69. On the contrary, she felt that there was so much material to choose from that she could not include everything she wanted in her early English classes. She also preferred working alone and was already excited about early English, which helped her own attitude towards the issue. Based on her answers, Teacher 6 was greatly aware of how early English should be introduced to young learners and fostered such qualities that were argued to be the prerequisites of a successful ELL teacher (see Enever 2011, Graham 2017), which also affected the need for any additional support.

(69) Yes I think [I would get help if needed] but I haven't even thought about it as I was so excited that like yes they have early English here too since I had already taught it in another school ... I have integrated it to other subjects and teaching overall so I don't know if I had needed or like I don't think I would have needed any more ideas on the contrary I feel like I don't have the time to do everything I've thought (Teacher 6)

On the other hand, two of the six teachers had negative experiences about the support from schools and work communities, as they felt that they had not received enough support to organize early language classes in a way that would best benefit the children. These teachers both worked at the same school, and it seemed that they did not utilize cooperation as a way to ease one's own teaching. They felt that neither the school nor the education provider had offered enough support for them to feel comfortable in this new role of early language teacher, as examples 70 and 71 illustrate. Additionally, Teacher 4 mentioned the lack of materials provided from the school and/or the municipality as the greatest hindrance. As mentioned in section 5.2, the lack of materials was seen automatically as a lack of support, especially by the older teachers.

(70) The school has not [offered support] per se, the municipality has organized some training like small pinch of training but like there has been no guidance but maybe it will change as the times change and they perhaps begin to pay more attention but they haven't invested to this much at all (Teacher 3)

(71) no it [the school] doesn't really support it's not really visible in that sense like obviously if I go and ask a language teacher surely I will get help but other than that there is no material we don't even have any guide books (Teacher 4)

Moreover, the head of the local education department and the school principal were seen as distant decision-makers, as the teachers felt that they had not been asked whether or not they

want to teach early English, but that the decision had been made for them, which can be seen from example 72. This annoyed the teachers, since they felt that they did not get to have any saying to the issue. Teacher 3 felt that his own skills were at a level that he was able to arrange early English classes well, but teacher 4 was more reluctant which also affected her thought about the process more negatively.

(72) No [there was no discussion about early language teaching] it was just decided that our school was going to be a part of it [the key project] the decision came elsewhere so it wasn't inside our school which was irritating that we weren't asked it was decided for us (Teacher 4)

Additionally, even though teachers 1 and 2 were happy with their school and how the whole early English education was organized, especially teachers 1 and 4 expressed dissatisfaction over the amount of support they had received from higher levels, meaning the local education department and the Finnish National Agency for Education. More support and guidelines were recalled, as can be seen from example 73 and 74. These teachers felt that they had been left alone at schools to decide the suitable guidelines and goals for early English, which according to them was not up to the schools decide.

(73) Well it is like should we get more support from up there [OPH] like what are we allowed to do and which areas should be covered during first grade English or some kind of guidelines since we are in like loose ground so I'm not really sure what I should teach so that's bothering (Teacher 1)

(74) There are no guidelines and last autumn there were no goals and still there are no clear goals in the core curriculum so we have pretty much our own curricula ... To my mind this became too fast so like we should have gotten some clear goals and material first (Teacher 4)

These two teachers, as previously discussed (see sections 5.2 and 5.3), are strongly relying on written material and instructions, which, as can be argued to some extent, is not the reality of a teacher anymore. Teacher education these days focuses strongly on educating teacher trainees to design their own teaching materials, activating pupils without books and including various methods into teaching. This, as argued in section 5.3.1, was not the reality in the 80's when teachers 1 and 4 have graduated from teacher education, and thus they might struggle to find materials and/or decide their own focuses and guidelines. Thus, they also feel that they have not been provided with enough guidance. It is true that there are no practical guidelines on how early language teaching should be organized yet as the core curriculum is only being currently

updated, and this is where the national education organizers could have stepped forwards and provided necessary support for those in need. This will be discussed further in section 6.

As the examples illustrate, older teachers seem to have the most negative experiences about the support that they have received and whether it has been adequate. As discussed in the previous chapter, this could have a great deal to do with the fact that these teachers are not used to finding information online as much as their younger companions, which might cause them the feeling of not being enough. This emphasizes the need for proper in-service training, that would ideally be fitted to match the needs of the different teachers from different generations. Moreover, working environment and community seem to have a strong effect on whether or not the teachers feel they have been offered enough support to organize early language teaching in a way that suits them and benefits the children best. If the support from the work community is missing, the teachers are left alone with their needs and wishes, which causes even more dissatisfaction. Thus, focus on healthy work environments and relationships is also needed in order to support the teachers in their work. Finally, schools and education providers within municipalities should aim to create an open discussion about the needs of the teachers and try to best answer to these needs, which would further support the teachers.

5.4.2 Who should teach early English

All of the teachers thought that class teachers would be able to teach early English to young children, provided that training was adequate. Most (4/6) of them recognised language teachers as the best choice if they were available, but thought that class teachers would manage the task if they had been offered proper training and guidelines beforehand as example 75 reveals. Moreover, teachers' own interest towards language was seen as a prerequisite for success in teaching ELL, and if class teachers were willing to enhance their own foreign language skills, they were thought to manage teaching early English.

(75) Obviously the best teacher would be a language teacher when thinking about the language but I'd say that class teachers can also manage if they are interested and have been provided with enough training (Teacher 3)

Alongside language teachers class teachers with language studies as their minor were seen to be optimal for early English teaching. Some of the teachers (2/6) did not consider themselves as fully competent in foreign languages, and named some of their colleagues who had studied

languages alongside class teacher studies as a better fit for early English teaching, as example 76 illustrates below. In most universities that provide class teacher training it is possible to study languages as minor subject, and thus become competent as a class and a subject teacher. Moreover, University of Jyväskylä has designed a specific English language oriented class teacher training program called JULIET (Jyväskylä University Learning, Internationalisation and English Teaching), which has been designed to encourage and qualify class teachers to integrate English into primary school teaching and teach it as a foreign language (University of Jyväskylä 2018). Approximately 12 class teacher students are chosen every year to participate in JULIET. This is an ideal education in terms of increasing language pedagogy and interest towards English language in primary schools, and as all of the teachers recognised, also suitable for providing language-oriented education for class teachers.

(76) I can feed them with words and phrases but I don't consider myself as a professional in understanding the structure of a language but then there are these class teachers who have specialized in languages and they do well in this for sure (Teacher 4)

Additionally, two of the class teachers were unsure about their competence in foreign languages and thus insecure over their own competence as early English teachers. Teacher 1 had already decided that she was not going to continue with English after the current academic year (which will be discussed more extensively in the next section, 5.4.3) and Teacher 4 thought of herself as somewhat competent to teach early English but did not want to continue after second grade as she wanted to make sure that the children received proper instruction and input during the later grades in primary school (see example 77). However, this is controversial in a sense that the base for future language learning is built during the first years of language learning, which would point towards fully competent foreign language users as teachers. As the ELLiE report (2011) suggested, successful early language teaching was managed through competent foreign language teachers who were aware of age fitted pedagogy as well as language pedagogy. This is important to recognise when discussing who should be entitled to teach languages during the first years of primary school, and will be further elaborated on in section 6.

(77) I believe that class teachers can manage during the first years of primary school but I personally think that I don't want to teach [English] for example in third grade since I think that it should then be handed over to a subject teacher who is surely competent in pronunciation (Teacher 4)

Class teachers' language skills were also discussed in terms of their readiness to teach languages. All of the teachers recognised the role of the teachers' language competence related to early language teaching, and thought that teachers should be provided with the choice of whether they want to teach languages or not. If a teacher does not consider their language competence to allow them to teach languages, they should not be made to do it. However, teacher 6 also mentioned her worry over the teachers who are clearly not competent enough to teach languages but neither refuse from it nor participate in any possible in-service training, as she had experienced in her previous workplace. As example 78 shows, she recognised the importance of a certain competence when teaching English to young learners, and mentioned that if a teachers' skills are not at a suitable level, someone else should take over those classes. This has been confirmed with Muñoz (2006) and Unsworth (2014), who argue that the amount of exposure is not necessarily the best predictor of the future scores and competence in the foreign language, but that the teachers' language proficiency needs to be taken into account as it provides a model to mimic for the young learners.

(78) Of course the teacher should know the language per se so it was great as a friend of mine was hired as a language shower teacher in another area so she holds English classes in that area with another English teacher as I was thinking that if you're not capable of teaching [early English] then someone competent should get the classes and it would be best if it was a proper language teacher but as with small children it has to be like in shorter sessions so it wouldn't work ... If you're struggling with it yourself you can't begin to learn the language to the detriment of the children and there would be so much extra work if you began to learn it alongside work but then again if a teacher is capable [to teach English] as I consider myself then there could be some kind of multi-professional occasions where you could get a language teacher's view on what are we aiming at (Teacher 6)

Finally, cooperation between different teachers was mentioned as crucial in terms of successful ELL, as examples 79 and 80 demonstrate. All of the teachers called for more cooperation within schools and within areas, so that class teachers would get ideas and viewpoints from language teachers and that language teachers would get wider pedagogical understanding about young children and their cognitive abilities. Teacher 5, the only language teacher participating in this study mentioned support and cooperation between class teachers and other subject teachers in her school as essential, as she felt that subject teacher education had failed to provide this knowledge (see section 5.3.2). All the class teachers participating in this study wished for more cooperation between class teachers and language teachers, so that class teachers with no background with language pedagogy could also improve their own methods. As can be interpreted, cooperation both ways is very much needed.

(79) It would be useful to discuss and share ideas and hear their [language teachers'] point of view as we haven't had this kind of discussion at all (Teacher 2)

(80) And it [cooperation between teachers] would be in key position [in terms of ELL] as in this job overall it is in key position in developing and improving this job and in feeling this job meaningful and in coping and for the children's best and all in all it is very much essential so I'd say that there needs to be more cooperation in the future (Teacher 3)

As the examples above illustrate, the teachers are mostly aware of the important role of a teacher's language competence when it comes to teaching young learners. Teacher 4 was the only one who did not think that early language classes would require a deeper understanding of the language, but her attitude towards ELL was also more reserved than the other teachers', which could have an effect on her way of thinking. Teacher 1, who also thought of herself as not fully competent in teaching English had decided to give her English classes to another teacher, who was very enthusiastic about languages. This shows her understanding of the importance of a teacher's language competence and its effect on the children. All of the other teachers had strong opinions about the level of competence that a teacher should remain at in order to be allowed to teach early language classes. Class teachers who were competent in English and/or another language or professional language teachers were acknowledged to be ideal ELL teachers, which is in line with previous research (see Enever 2014; Graham 2017; De Bot 2014). Altogether, most of the teachers seemed to have a strong understanding on the importance of a properly qualified ELL teacher, and most of them considered themselves as able to carry out successful early language teaching. This will be further elaborated on in the next section.

5.4.3 Teachers' own readiness to teach ELL

In this final section the teachers' own readiness to teach early English to young learners will be discussed drawing on the interviews, previously discussed examples and the teachers' attitude towards ELL. As can be interpreted based on the interviews, teachers mostly had a good understanding of their own readiness and qualities of a competent early language teacher.

Most of the teachers (4/6) were very enthusiastic and excited about early English teaching, which has been defined as one of the major qualities of a successful early language teacher (see Enever 2014, Unsworth et al 2014, Edelenbos et al 2003) as it is crucial in terms of building the language learning base for children. It builds the foundation for successful ELL teaching, and

is also crucial in terms of a teacher's readiness to teach early languages. This can be seen in example 81 below.

(81) Yes I am interested about it [early language teaching] and like it and have seen the role of it that it's important and it is great that begins already during first grade ... I feel satisfied [with her own level of competence] of course it fluctuates as sometimes it feel like I've got no time to prepare and then it's kind of like left with nothing but then I always think that we will revise and that's okay (Teacher 2)

Additionally, these four teachers (teacher 2, 3, 5 and 6) recognized the teacher's own role and responsibility for designing such classes that benefit the children and their language awareness. They mentioned the key qualities of a successful ELL teacher to be their own willingness to dedicate time and effort into the classes and to put thought into it, in order to create positive experiences about language learning for the children, as illustrated in example 82. These four teachers all recognized the teachers' responsibility for designing such classes, and thought of ELL as something that the teacher needs to be willing to put effort into.

(82) Well that [own readiness to teach ELL] is a question of whether I've put effort into it so that I've taken those kinds of means ... surely I could have done more and better but then when I think that it's only calculated to be one hour per week so I guess some criteria needs to be included and sometimes I do more and sometimes less as it's not like it's 10 o'clock on Monday morning but more like here and there so in that sense I'd say that I've done good things and invented some plays and games and such where English has been present so I'd say pretty good (Teacher 3)

Moreover, these teachers understood the nature of ELL (it being playful, light, fun and suitable for the children's age and stage of development) and the kind of methodology that this type of teaching requires, as can be seen from example 83. They all thought of ELL as something that needs to be easy for the children to acquire without the pressure of learning (see also section 5.1.3) and that their own methodology needed to fit this purpose. This, too, has been named as one of the key qualities of a successful ELL teacher, which points towards a competent level of readiness to teach languages to young learners.

(83) I try to keep it fun and switch methods so there's playing singing sometimes we watch some English videoclips and there are fun tasks so that it's part of this nice and pleasant communication and school day and not like we begin to learn English but more like learning without fully noticing so then their attitude towards it remains positive and there are not many of experiences like I can't do this and this is difficult and I don't want to try but like looking at for example colours and you can look and compare with a friend like hey what's this so it remains playful (Teacher 3)

Finally, these four teachers recognized the need for their own willingness to improve their language skills and to get another perspective from for example language subject teachers or other experts of the language. All of these four teachers, including teacher 5 who was a language subject teacher, named class teacher skills and age-fitted pedagogy as necessary for ELL teachers in order for them to succeed in motivating the children and preserving their joy towards learning new things. On the other hand, teacher 2, 3 and 6 who were class teachers also mentioned the need for themselves to be interested about (English) language(s) and willing to improve their own skills. This is an important notion, which can be seen in example 84.

(84) If you have like good basis [to teach ELL] like I'd say that I have [then you can teach it] and there could be some multiprofessional cooperation and event where you could get the language teacher's vision (Teacher 6)

As the example above illustrate, these four teachers have a clear understanding of a successful ELL teacher's nature, qualities and level of competence, and they all expressed their willingness to improve their own skills and qualities for their own professional development, but most importantly, for the children and their learning process. What could be argued to be the most important feature of a suitable ELL teacher is their attitude towards language learning and willingness to constantly develop their own skills and understanding about the concept of early language teaching, as without the eagerness to thrive, no development can ever be achieved. Naturally, other qualities such as teachers' own language competence, their knowledge over the children's cognitive levels and ability to fit their own methods into the needs of the children are also required. Based on these four teachers' quotations and interviews (see sections 5.1.3, 5.1.4 and 5.4), their readiness to teach ELL seems to be at a level that can benefit the children in the future.

Contrarily, teacher 1 and 4, who had been teaching for longest, felt that they had not been offered enough support nor materials to fully succeed in early language teaching. As teacher 4 already stated in example 76, she did not consider herself as a professional language teacher and did not think that her level of competence would be enough for fruitful instruction at later stages of primary school. She felt that her skills were enough for grades 1 and 2 as she did not think the requirements were as high as in the later stages, but as has already been discussed (see section 5.1.4), a teacher's own language competence is crucial in order to successfully provide the necessary model for the children. Moreover, both of these teachers thought of early English

classes as very laborious and requiring too much work, which culminated in the need for materials and support. This is seen in example 85.

(85) No I haven't [gotten any tools] so you have to do a terrible amount of work and to think what to do this week (Teacher 4)

Teacher 1 considered early English to be very laborious and was also somewhat insecure about her own foreign language competence, which led to her choice to not continue with early English teaching the next year. She felt that teachers, who were more oriented towards languages and had more interest in developing their own skills would fit the task better, and she could concentrate on the subjects she felt she had stronger understanding of. She mentioned the lack of materials and suitable education and the laboriousness of the subject as the main reasons for giving up her English classes. As for what could be done better in order to help teacher with ELL and its requirements, she mentioned framework and materials as the most important suggestions for development, as example 86 illustrates.

(86) Like framework so like what are we aiming for with this early language teaching and like some contents and also what materials are we allowed to use what is legal so these three things (Teacher 1)

Both of these teachers were not extensive users of English, which could be the cause for their own insecurity over their language competence. This could also affect their own attitude towards these classes, as it required a great deal of effort from them to design them. It seems that these two teachers needed to put more effort into designing the classes than the other teachers who were more regular users of English and who had also completed their teacher education more recently. This meant that they most likely had been better trained for the use of digital materials, out of book-teaching approach and phenomenon-based learning than the older teacher. This could explain the older teachers' more reserved attitudes towards the renewal of the language teaching in primary schools.

In sum, the teachers' level of competence in whatever language they are teaching, their willingness to constantly develop their own skills (by regularly participating in in-service training and educating themselves on the issue) and their education background seem to be the strongest predictors of their readiness to teach early language classes. The more the teachers are interested and excited about language learning and recognize the importance of positive language education for young children, the better they are able to also develop the necessary

skills to deliver these types of classes. The teachers' own attitudes and previous education play a great role in this, which is strongly in line with previous studies on beneficial early language teacher qualities (see section 2.3). Suggestions for improvements in teacher education and factors increasing teachers' readiness are discussed in the next chapter.

6 DISCUSSION

This chapter will conclude the current study and offer concrete implications for future work regarding early language learning and teaching and its organization. First, the current study will be evaluated in terms of its validity and reliability in section 6.1. Then, in section 6.2 the implications of this study will be reported. The section is divided into three subcategories: first, general attitudes affecting early language teaching will be discussed and possible improvements for development considered; second, the necessary support for teachers in order to succeed in early language teaching will be examined; and third, some suggestions for future research regarding ELL will be provided.

6.1 Evaluation of the current study

Important factors to consider are the validity and the reliability of a study. Validity determines the legitimacy of the data and of the drawn conclusions and interpretations. Reliability, in turn, concerns the systematic analysis of the data and the reliability of the interpretations (Hyvärinen et al 2010). As the current study is a qualitative study conducted and analysed by the means of interviews and content analysis, any exact replication would be very difficult, and not even necessary, to conduct.

The purpose of the current study is to offer insights on the teachers' experiences of their reality, and to offer implications for future education and teacher training in order to best prepare teachers to succeed in early language learning. Another goal is to offer a starting point for future discussion on improving the quality of teacher education and support for teachers currently in service. Teachers' voice was important to capture, and thus in-depth interviews were chosen as the method that would best serve the goals. Thus, any big scale samplings were not relevant for the purpose of the study, and generalisation in a sense of generalising the results to fit a larger group of teachers can not be made. However, possible generalisation can be composed in terms of possible logic (Hyvärinen et al 2010), as one can assume that concepts that came up often in the same light are common within teacher profession. Moreover, the results of the current study were mostly in line with previous research that has been conducted on early language learning. This points also towards legitimacy of the current study.

As mentioned above and clarified in section 4.3, the data was collected via semi-structured theme interviews. This proposes limitations to the study, as there is always the risk for the interviewer to misinterpret the answers and lead the discussion too strongly towards preferred answers (Tuomi and Sarajärvi 2018). I sought to decrease the risk by giving the interviewees space to correct their answers and by intentionally concentrating on not guiding them too much. The advantage of theme interviews is the possibility for open discussion and unexpected turns (see section 4.3.1), which offered the interviewees the chance to freely reflect on their own experiences. This provided a detailed, deeper data. All of the teachers were able to reflect on their own experiences and wanted to express their feelings, as they considered the topic to be a relevant one. As the interviewer I felt I was able to create a situation where the interviewees were able to answer to the questions truthfully, drawing on their own experiences. This was crucial for the reliability of the study.

The teachers who participated in the study varied considerably in terms of teaching experience, education background and their own stance towards foreign languages. This enabled a wide range of opinions and experiences to be evaluated and discussed. Naturally, the limitations of a small scale sample were present when analysing the data, and as mentioned above, these results cannot be generalized to fit all primary school teachers in Central Finland, let alone in Finnish context as a whole. The teachers participating in the study were most likely interested in the subject and felt they had something to say about it. As the interview request was sent to 18 teachers, of which only 6 teachers participated in the study, it can be stated that the current results do not reflect the norm in any school.

The accuracy of the data analysis needs to be evaluated, too. As the data was a qualitative one, the analysis required more interpretation than a quantitative data and for example chart would have required. Qualitative data always leaves room for the reader's own interpretation, and the risk for misinterpretation might be present (Saldaña 2011: 8). I tried to minimize this risk by asking for clarifications and reformulations when executing the interviews and by reading the data several times before and during the analysis. Moreover, any hypotheses were not made prior to the analysis, which allowed any interesting themes to appear from the data with each reading. The essence of the experiences was vital to be captured in order to be able to provide any implications and for the reliability of this study.

6.2 Towards successful ELL

This section will provide concrete implications for the grass root level to schools that are currently battling to find balance in early language teaching and to organize language teaching according to the new amendment and the new core curriculum that has been revisited to meet the needs of successful ELL. It will also address current teacher training and offer suggestions for improving the quality of both class teacher and subject teacher education, in order for the education to better succeed in providing teacher trainees with tools that would fit to the reality of primary school teachers and to increase cooperation between teacher professions.

The three research questions that this study sought to answer were: 1. *How do the teachers taking part in this study perceive Early Language Learning (ELL)?*, 2. *Do the teachers consider themselves able to arrange teaching in a way that benefits the children's language learning also in the future?* and 3. *Do the teachers feel that they have been provided with adequate training and tools in order to meet the needs of the children (regarding ELL)?* Based on the answers of the interviewed teachers, the more recently graduated class teachers with possibly experience from teaching in kindergarten mostly regarded themselves as able to teach their pupils in a way that would benefit them, whereas the teachers who were close to retirement age were more insecure about their own skills and methods. ELL was mostly perceived as a positive phenomenon, although age seemed to play a role in this, too, as the older teachers were the ones reacting more negatively to the change. All of the teachers called for more adequate in-service training that would better answer to the needs of the reality at schools. These answers will be elaborated further in the sections below.

6.2.1 General attitudes towards ELL

Attitudes of the primary school teachers were regarded as a single most crucial factor affecting the quality of early language teaching, as noted in the ELLiE study (2011, see section 2.3). Teachers' attitudes not only contribute to the work they are willing to put into designing activities for class, preparing materials and introducing different methods, but also to their willingness to participate in in-service training, developing their own skills and reflecting their own work. Furthermore, as Enever (2014: 231) stated, primary school teachers have a strong effect on the pupils' way of thinking. This is something that needs to be recognized already during teacher education, as well as in schools.

The way ELL is portrayed in teacher education and the quality of language pedagogy courses is crucial in terms of getting teacher trainees enthusiastic and interested about language teaching. As A1-language is introduced more extensively in all primary schools in Finland, the reality of a class teacher's work also changes. Languages become a greater part of the everyday school life, and teachers need to be competent to teach at least English, as they are competent to teach any other subject too. As could be determined from the teachers' interviews in this study, the teachers who belonged to the older generation, being not as used to communicating in English were also the ones most reluctant towards this new amendment. The same pattern follows any subject that is being taught in teacher education: if a teacher has not been taught to teach that subject, the quality of teaching is most likely not as high as it could be with proper instruction. This shifts the focus to teacher education, as the role of languages as a part of class teacher education needs to be recognized more extensively not later than now.

The need for reforming teacher education does not concern only class teacher department but also language subject teacher department. Language teacher trainees must be offered more possibilities to develop their pedagogical understanding concerning young children and also their repertoire of educational methods. These skills build the base for all pedagogical function, and are needed in all stages of education. Moreover, as joint schools including both lower and upper levels of comprehensive schools are becoming more common, language teachers as well as other subject teachers will most likely be teaching in two levels, primary and upper comprehensive level in the future. This increases the need for strong pedagogical foundation, as these skills are the base for all learning in primary schools.

The reform of the teacher education (both class- and subject teacher) would also enhance multiprofessional cooperation over the department lines. This type of cooperation is very much needed already during teacher education, as it forms the foundation for future cooperation at schools and teaches the benefits of this type of collaboration. This would for its part enhance class teachers knowledge about language pedagogy, and vice versa. As the current study revealed, objections to the importance of ELL mainly occurred due to the lack of knowledge about the benefits of ELL (see section 5.1.1). This could be revised by increasing the status of foreign languages in class teacher education, but also by offering teachers the possibilities to work together in multiprofessional teams. As teacher 3 mentioned in example 48 (see section 5.2), cooperation between teachers is vital for success in ELL.

Finally, teachers need to also be offered enough possibilities to have an effect on the decision-making process in the municipalities. The two teachers that felt they had not been offered enough support had also felt dissatisfied with the decision-making process as they had not been offered any chances to get their opinions heard. It would be extremely important to provide teachers opportunities to express their opinions about any major changes that are taking place at schools, in order to secure an open, positive atmosphere at schools. As the results of the current study illustrate, whether or not teachers felt they had a saying towards new changes strongly affected the feeling of receiving support from the school.

Generally speaking, the situation in Central Finland in terms of possibilities to participate in in-service training, getting opinions heard and adapting to new amendments, but there is also room for improvement. Schools need to offer their teachers the possibility to have a saying towards how any new changes are realized. Moreover, possibilities for cooperation between teachers not only within a same school, but within municipalities should be offered regularly. Finally, teacher education needs to reconsider its course supply and the composition of class as well as subject teacher training, keeping language awareness in mind and offering teacher trainees the possibility to educate themselves further in language pedagogy.

6.2.2 Support for teachers

As mentioned above, whether or not teachers felt they were able to affect the introduction of any new change in their schools affected their own attitudes towards the issue. This is strongly linked to the support they had received from their schools. As the results of this study indicate, the schools and the municipalities were mostly responsible for the support offered for teachers prior to introduction of early language teaching. Two of the six teachers felt they had not been offered enough support from the “upper levels”, i.e. the municipality or the government, and this affected their teaching and attitudes towards ELL. Chapters below will provide improvements to the quality of support the teachers would need to receive in order to succeed in early language teaching.

First, teachers need to be offered proper in-service training that enables them to improve their own language skills. This is crucial, as teachers’ foreign language competence need to be on a certain level to be able to execute successful ELL. The teachers serve as a model for the children

to mimic, which points towards a strong need for a good quality pronunciation and other language skills (for studies on teachers' language skills affecting the pupils' scores in foreign language, see Unsworth 2017; Enever 2014; De Bot 2014). The need for proper in-service training is crucial especially for those class teachers who have graduated a long time ago and who have not completed any language studies during their class teacher education. This is something that the two older teachers also recognized, as for example examples x and x indicate.

Age seems to be somewhat determining the need for in-service training, as the results of this study indicate (see section 5.3). However, adequate support and additional training needs to be provided for teachers regardless of their age. The situation, where a non-competent teacher is building the base for any future language learning is unsustainable and needs to be seriously reconsidered by any education provider. A competence achieved from upper secondary education is clearly not enough, as it lacks in language pedagogy. Adequate competence for language education and increasing language awareness in primary schools needs to be made available for class teachers, who might be obligated to teach languages without proper pre-service training.

Second, pre-service training, i.e. teacher education, needs to be developed further to meet the needs of a current class and/or subject teachers' reality. Currently, English, Swedish or any foreign language is not a prominent part of class teacher education, as well as neither is primary education level pedagogy a part of language subject teacher training. The need for improving teacher education is strongly recognized by the interviewed teachers (see section 5.3.2). Class teachers call for compulsory English and language pedagogy courses as part of their class teacher programme, whereas teacher 5, being a language teacher, strongly criticised the current model of subject teacher training which lacks in pedagogy. This situation calls for cooperation over the department lines within universities, so that both language teachers as well as class teachers are prepared to face the reality of a primary school teacher.

There is obviously a strong need for reforming teacher education to fit the current position of both class teachers and language teachers, which I, as a current language subject teacher interested in becoming also a class teacher, can agree on. Universities providing teacher education need to reconsider the role of language, as their position in primary schools is inevitably increasing with the challenges of multicultural classrooms that the teachers are facing

without proper training for it. Teacher education departments cannot be the last ones answering to the need for change - the changes are needed not any later than now.

Finally, the support from the work community and the higher levels (including municipalities as education providers and the government) is necessary for teachers aiming for successful early language teaching. Class teachers and language teachers need to be provided with opportunities to work together, designing the best possible models for early language teaching in their schools, involving both expertises: languages and small children pedagogy. Moreover, clear guidelines are needed for successful ELL. The Finnish National Agency for Education is currently designing the core curriculum for early language learning, which will provide the overall guidelines to schools. However, schools need to work in close collaboration with different teachers for the areal curriculum, and teachers need to be included in any decision-making process regarding these guidelines. The support from the higher level as well as from the work community is vital, if success in ELL and the benefits during the later stages are to be seen.

In sum, the three main points for better success in ELL are: 1) teacher education, for both class teacher and subject teacher, needs to be reformed to meet the needs of the current situation. Languages and language-oriented pedagogy are to be made a permanent part of class teacher education, and language teachers need to be offered more courses and training in pedagogics, including small children pedagogy. Then, 2) proper, child-centred in-service training needs to be offered for teachers currently facing the challenge of teaching early languages without sufficient skills to do it. Teachers should be consulted about their own needs and wishes for beneficial in-service training and participation needs to be made available. Finally, 3) multiprofessional cooperation including class teacher, language teachers and other educators participating in ELL process needs to be made more frequent. This type of cooperation would be undoubtedly fruitful in the future, as the expertise from different professions would be brought together. These are the actions necessary to be taken to secure the quality of language teaching in primary education.

6.2.3 Suggestions for future research

To continue research on ELL it would be important to widen the current perspective in for example conducting a quantitative study on teachers' competence to teach early languages. This

would help to generalize the results and to provide an overview of the language teaching quality in primary schools, as the reality is that in most schools class teachers will be taking over early English classes, since recruiting competent language teachers might not be possible in light of resources in most of the schools. Moreover, this type of study could provide foundations for future funding and would ultimately lead also to re-examining teacher education and whether or not it answers to the reality of primary school teachers.

An important theme that appeared from the current data was teachers' language competence. It would be beneficial to study the factors affecting this competence in class teacher education to be able to better meet the needs of these teachers when developing class teacher training and designing adequate in-service training. Additionally, the class teacher trainees and their readiness to teach early languages in increasingly multilingual schools would be interesting to examine, as it would most probably provide straight indications to teacher training and how to improve it to meet the needs of the globalized schools.

Important features in ELL was an essential theme in the study which would be studied further to provide insights on how teachers in for example different parts of Finland teach early languages. This would provide immediate ideas for in-service training. The "how" strongly relates to the teachers' competence to teach early languages, as it reveals their practices in action. This would be beneficial to study further to improve the overall quality of primary school language teaching in Finland.

Additional studies could be conducted drawing on the implications of this study, thus benefiting early language learning and teaching in the future. An intervention could be designed to enhance multiprofessional cooperation, which was one of the major findings and implications of this study. With help of interventions and multiprofessional projects the benefit of this type of cooperation could be tested in reality. This would also provide a common ground for class teachers and subject teachers to continue cooperation from.

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Appendix 1 - The interview outline

Background information:

- Education
- How long have you been teaching
- What languages do you teach and to which grade

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS BY THEMES

Background

1. Have you previously taught language classes?
2. If yes, do you think it supports your current role as an ELL (early language learning) teacher? How did it differ from ELL?
3. If not, do you think you would benefit from earlier experience? How?

The role of ELL

4. What do you think of ELL?
 - a. Why do you think it is organized?
5. How important do you think ELL is?
 - a. Why?
6. How has ELL been organized in your school?
 - a. Was it discussed beforehand, how was it reasoned...
7. What is the role of ELL in your work community?
8. Is there any cooperation between school and homes in terms of ELL?
 - a. What kind? How have the parents reacted?

Teachers' readiness

9. How does it feel to teach ELL?
10. To your mind, what is the role of a teacher in ELL?
11. What kind of training have you received?
 - a. What is the core element in ELL training?
 - b. What kind of training would you hope for?
12. Have you been provided with tools that enable you to teach ELL in a way that benefits the children in the future?
 - a. Does the school support ELL? How?

Goals

13. What are the goals of ELL (to your mind)? Where is it aiming at?
14. How do you proceed towards these goals in your own teaching? Any concrete examples?
15. From the perspective of the teacher and teaching, what is important in ELL?
 - a. Is there something you prioritise?

Other

16. Anything else you would like to add?

Appendix 2 - Teachers' quotes in Finnish

(1) Nään sen (varhentamisen) melko tärkeenä että se on musta hyvä asia ja mä ajattelen et siinä on paljon sitä oppimispotentiaalia mikä on ehkä jätetty hyödyntämättä kun se on aloitettu kolmannella luokalla niin kyllä se on hyödyllistä ja järkevääkin (Teacher 3)

(2) On mun mielestä kielet tosi tärkeitä ja kun ne menee hirveen luontevasti siihen opetukseen ni se tuntuu jotenkin hölmöltä nyt et miksei aikasemmin hyödynnetty et koska se menee nii itsestää ja nehän oppii sitä ihan huomaamatta silleen ettei välttämättä itekään tajuu (Teacher 6)

(3) Kyllä se on tärkeä mutta en mä pidä sitä semmosena et se ois ollu ehdoton nyt epulle jo et kyl mä uskon et se että se olis alkanu toisella luokalla mikä oli tää edellinen päätös nii musta se olis voinu riittää ... Musta olis tavallaan epulla tärkeempää se että tällä suomen kielellä juurrutettais nää koululaisen taidot et tän kokemuksen perusteella tuntuu et olis voinu riittää se kakkoseltakin alottaminen että ei tuu liian paljon kaikenlaista vaikka kai heillä eskarissakin on jotain jo ollu kun tietävät jo värejä viikonpäiviä jotain asioita mutta itse en olis tätä lähteny ajaan (Teacher 4)

(4) Kyl se silleen vähän poikkeee varmaan niinku hyvään suuntaan heidän mielestään kun vielä enemmän saa tehdä ja touhuta kun jollain muilla tunneilla (Teacher 2)

(5) No mä aattelin et siinä on se herkkyyskausi aika hyvä oppia ja jää mieleen sanoja varsinki tuolla alkuopetuksessa huomaa et se luontanen motivaatio niillä niinku imee sitä tietoo on niin semmonen valtava et varmaan todella otollista aikaa oppia kieliäkin (Teacher 6)

(6) Siinä on se herkkyyskausi ja silleen luontevaa alottaa et kyllähän tässä kohtaa voidaan jo sanoa et ne hyödyt on ihan kiistattomat et on ehdottoman hyvä juttu (Teacher 5)

(7) Mä oon huomannu että lapset on itekin kauheen innokkaita ne oli hirveen innoissaan nyt epulla et nyt se alkaa se englantti ne kauheesti sitä sillee hehkutti et tykkää niistä tunneista kyllä tosi paljon (Teacher 2)

(8) Lapset on innokkaita ja suhtautuu myöitämielisesti kun koulunsa alottava lapsi on pääsääntöisesti kuitenkin innokas oppimaan uutta ni siinähen englantikin menee sopivina annoksina ja sopivissa paloissa (Teacher 3)

(9) Lapset on kyllä hyvin innokkaita niihin tarttuu hirveen helposti sanat siinä pitää olla tosi tarkka että se ei tosiaan mene liian raskaaksi heille koska siellä on monilla kuitenkin ihan niitä suomen kielen vaikeuksia lukemaan oppimisessa niin se ei saa mennä niinku edelle ettei mee sekasin (Teacher 4)

(10) Mä oon tykänny tosi paljon musta se on ollu kauheen luontevaa jollain lailla ottaa siihen alkuopetuksen päivään ja helppo että se on tullu aamurutiineissa ja loruina vaikka ennen ruokailuun menoa (Teacher 2)

(11) Sehän on osa tätä kun opetus uusiutuu ja muuttuu ja aina tulee jotain muutoksia niin nyt se on tää kielen aikaisempi opettaminen niin musta se nähdään semmosena luontaisena kehityksenä eikä se oo tuonu mitään hämmennystä sillä tavalla että nyt mä sitä joudun opettamaan en koe yhtään sillä tavalla (Teacher 3)

(12) Mun mielestä se on tosi kivaa kyllä koska sillä saa lähtökohtasesti ne tykkään englannista (Teacher 6)

(13) No mä oletan että ajatellaan että lapsi hyötyy siitä ja oppii sitä helpommin ja sen kielitaito tulee karttumaan paremmin kun se alotetaan aikasemmin ja että siitä on hyötyä tässä yhäti globalisoituvassa maailmassa (Teacher 3)

(14) Tämmönen niinkun suomalaisten kielitaito varmasti karttuu vahvistuu rohkastuu nimenomaan siihen puhumiseen että kyllä se varmaan mitä aikasemmin joku asia alotetaan niin sitä helpompi se on niinku lapsille (Teacher 4)

(15) Kiinnostuksen herättäminen sitä kieltä kohtaan ja semmonen et lapset oppii laulujen leikkien avulla niinkun aika kevyesti tätä kieltä että ei niinkään työkirjoja että ne oppii yllättävän paljon kun leikitään ja lauletaan (Teacher 1)

(16) Mun mielestä ne tavoitteet on ilon säilyttäminen ehkä pääasiassa että kyllä se on lähinnä sitä tutustuttamista ja orientaatioo siihen asiaan (Teacher 2)

(17) Musta on järkevää hyödyntää se oppimisen potentiaali et voi olla semmonenkin vaikutus et asenne kieliin on ylipäättään positiivisempaa ja sitä kautta vaikkapa ruotsinkin alottaminen vaikkakin vaan yhdellä luokalla aikasemmin on tehny hyvää ainakin mitä mä oon kuullu miten innoissaan kuutoset on siitä ollu niin siinä mielessä et on kaikille hyvä (Teacher 3)

(18) Se on mun mielestä nimenomaan se myönteinen suhtautuminen englantiin ja siitä englannista motivoitumiseen ja innostuksen ja kiinnostuksen herättäminen ja mun mielestä siinä on just se et jokainen pystyy kehittyä omalla tasollaan et ei oo semmosta et nyt pitäis osata kaikki tää tokalle mennessä vaan se että siinä on just se semmonen sulattelu et sit ku mennään kolmoselle ni tulee niitä samoja juttuja ja hirveen kiva et kun ne alottaa niin tulee semmonen et hei tän mä osaan (Teacher 6)

(19) Saadaan varmuutta siihen puhumiseen ja ääntäminen myöskin helpottuu et kyllähän sen nyt jo näkee vaikka noi jotka alotti ykköseltä niin niiden ääntäminen on tosi kaunista (Teacher 5)

(20) Tää niinku helpottaa englannin kielen oppimista tulevaisuudessa ja se voi olla että se jatko on heillä helpompaa tulevina vuosina että voidaan päästä jo vähän syvemmälle eikä niin arastella sitä kielen käyttöä niissä sosiaalisissa tilanteissa et kyllä mä luulen et tää vois olla aika hyvä siihen et uskalletaan käyttää sitä kieltä (Teacher 1)

(21) Varmaan madaltaa sitä kynnystä siel kolmosella kun niil tulee kuitenkin paljon kaikkee muutakin siellä kolmosella nii sit se englanti voi tuntua aika kovalta paukulta joillekin keillä nyt ei kaikki suju kun tanssi ni se voi olla niille aika kiva et niillä on jo korvassa jotain englannin kieltä sanastoo ja muuta ni solahtaa kivemmin käyntiin (Teacher 6)

(22) Eikä niitä tavoitteita oo vielääkään opsissa selkeitä et ihan omat opsit meillä on ... ei (koulu) tätä tue varsinaisesti et ite joutuu kaiken ettimään (Teacher 4)

(23) Leikinomaisuus ja toiminnallisuus et ne lapset saa liikkua ja tehdä ja pysyy mielenkiinto yllä et se on semmosta monipuolista ja hauskaa (Teacher 5)

(24) Pääpaino pitäis olla siinä leikkimisessä ja kielisuihkutustyyppisessä ... ja kehollista et jos on lauluja ni jos siihen pystyy sitä kehollista yhdistään ni ilman muuta se liike mukaan (Teacher 6)

(25) Mä koen sen tärkeenä että ne metodit kohtais sen lapsen tason ja just sen että se lapsi oppis sitä kieltä ja sen myönteisen asenteen siihen kielten opiskeluun et se vaikuttaa paremmin siihen myöhäisempäänkin asenteeseen ja minäkuvaan itsestä oppijana ja sitä kautta tois sitä luottamusta et minä opin ja sitä kautta parempiin oppimistuloksiin ja parempaan kielitaidon karttumiseen (Teacher 3)

(26) Kyllä sen jollain tavalla pitää olla johdonmukaista että se ei oo semmonen sillisalaatti että asia sieltä toinen täältä vaan että ne toistuis ne asiat siellä että ne värit vaikka ei tuu vaan kerran vaan ne tulee usein toistuen vuoden mittaan niinku erilaisissa tilanteissa et ei se kertakuulemalla tietenkään jää mieleen (Teacher 4)

(27) toisto et niitähän tulee sit kun ne on siinä rutiineissa niin ne tietyt asiat toistuu tosi paljon ja silloin ne niinku automatisoituu ja pikkuhiljaa se sanavarasto sieltä kasvaa (Teacher 2)

(28) Aika tavalla kiinnostuksen herättämistä heissä eikä niinkun kokeita pidetä siitä kielestä vaan että se olisi positiivinen ilmapiiri se on tosiaan tärkeetä eikä vertaa niitä lapsia keskenään että tää osaa nyt enemmän kun tämä eikä sitä mitenkään saa korostaa (Teacher 1)

(29) Mä aina katon et mistä saan ne innostuun ja lypsän siitä kaikki irti et tehään niin kauan ku riittää motivaatiota et ei nyt turhaa tyrkytä jotain mistä ne ei tykkää et pakko käydä tää sanasto läpi hinnalla millä hyvänsä vaan ihan sama vaikka kulutettais puhki se biisi mistä ne tykkää (Teacher 6)

(30) Asiat ei saa olla liian vaikeita et ne ois jotenkin liitettävissä siihen lapsen arkeen et helppoja asioita englanniksi (Teacher 4)

(31) Kyllä se ekaluokan ope on aika tärkeä näille ja se mitä opettaja sanoo niin kyllähän se heille jää mieleen että nehän on vasta niinkun oppimisen alkutaipaleella nämä lapset niin hirveen paljon pitäisi kannustaa heitä (Teacher 1)

(32) Kyllä täällä pitää osata heittäytyä ja hupsutella ja pitää olla semmonen tatsi siihen pienten kans tekemiseen et on ite leikeissä mukana (Teacher 5)

(33) Kyl se edellyttää sitä et se on sille opettajalle jollain lailla luonteva se rooli mä luulen et jos se olis hirmu vaikeeta itselle se englannin kielen puhuminen nii haluisko sitä sitten joka välissä käyttäkään ... kyl se on varmaan aika paljon opettajan oman innostuksen ja sen suhteen et mikä se oma suhde siihen englannin puhumiseen on nii sen varassa (Teacher 2)

(34) Mä mietin siellä jolly phonicsissa sitä et ku lausumista on niin montaa eri versioo et mun mielestä pitäis vaan rohkasta käyttään sitä kieltä eikä takertua siihen et miten sä äännät sitä jos nyt ei tuu ihan semmosia dramaattisia mokia mut et mun mielestä on hyvä et se opettaja osaa lausua ne oikein mut ei takerruta siihen et miten se oppilas lausuu et voi niinku korjata toistamalla mut ei lähetä terottaan tai tehä siitä numeroo (Teacher 6)

(35) Niin sitä mä taas mietin että mitenhän siellä se ees toteutuu kun mulla oli semmonen käsitys että ne ei välttämättä sitä osaa sitä englannin kieltä itekää (Teacher 6)

(36) Onhan se niin ihanaa täällä kun noi (oppilaat) on niin innoissaan kaikesta et ei tarvii kun vähä heittäytyä ja sanoo et hei nyt leikitään papukaijoja nii heti ne on mukana nii siinä se opettajan rooli näkyy kans et pitää osata innostaa ja tietää mikä toimi (Teacher 5)

(37) (open rooli on olla) Positiivinen kannustaja ja tuoda niitä erilaisia asioita ja erilaisia tapoja et on innostunu siitä koko työstään niin sillonhan siinä samalla tavalla samanlaiset perusteet pätee kun liikunnassa tai matikassa tai missä tahansa muussa et saa ne pienet lapset innostuun ja mukaan siihen juttuun (Teacher 3)

(38) Opettajan rooli on tietysti että hän ois kiinnostunu ja on innostava ja pystyy käyttään niitä keinoja jotka olis tämmöset et lapsi innostuu et pitäähän siinä olla sitä pedagogiikkaa ja vainua siihen ja sit myös se kiinnostus siihen kieleen ja millä tavalla sitä voi ottaa ja varioida sitä toimintaa ja työskentelyä (Teacher 3)

(39) Ihan yhtäläillä sen (opettajan oman tekemisen) pitäis olla semmosta rohkeeta että ei tarvii pelätä sitä että joku asia ei mee ihan täydellisesti et näkee senkin et opettajakin voi tehdä virheen (Teacher 4)

(40) Antaa kokemuksen siitä kielestä et ei mitään suuria tavoitteita vaan että se ois semmonen ihan tavallinen asia että englantiakin voi puhua ... se myönteisyyden tuominen et ei tarvii pelätä vierasta kieltä ja olla rohkee vaan ja sanoo niitä yksinkertasia sanoja ja lauseita ihan näin et leikinomaisuus ja ei liian vakavaa (Teacher 4)

(41) Mä oon ehkä niin vanha opettaja että mä toisaalta kaipaun sitä materiaalia ja olis ehkä enemmän oppikirjaa kun tuntuu että mitä mä nyt opetan et se on vähän niinku hakuammuntaa ja sillisalaattia sieltä täältä et olis joku runko että mitä pitäis ekaluokalla opettaa niin helpottais sitä meikäläisen työskentelyä (Teacher 1)

(42) Materiaali on kyllä aika heikko ei oo muuta kun silleen itse etsimällä et pitää itse olla hyvin aktiivinen et jos halua jotain kuvatauluja tai lauluja tai muuta niin itse pitää kasata se materiaali (Teacher 4)

(43) Ehdottomasti tää on työläin oppiaine koska ei oo mitään sä kaivat ite sen ihan täysin sen kaiken ei sulla oo mitään kirjaa ... Että mun ei itse tarvis etsiä et mulla olis materiaalipaketit jossa ois ryhmittäin näitä aiheita ihan niinkun sitten kolkiltakin eteenpäin meneehän ne sielläkin samanlailla ettei mun tarvii ite kaivaa netistä niitä (Teacher 4)

(44) Vaikka onkin tämmönen uus asia niin ei se oo sinänsä työlästä et ne sisällöt ja semmoset jutut niin ei niihin hirveesti vaivaa joudu näkeen niin emmä sitä sillä tavalla koe työlääks vaan koen ihan mukavana. Kyllä tän työn työläys tulee muista asioista (Teacher 3)

(45) En mä koe sitä mitenkään ongelmana kun tuolla on netti pullollaan kaikkia laulujuttuja ja leikkejä ja muuta. Tiiän mitä hakee ja mitkä jutut toimii niin en mä ajattele sitä mitenkää työläänä (Teacher 5)

(46) Tavallaan se on hyvä asia että ei oo materiaaleja koska sitten taas meilläkin on se yks sähköinen materiaali mutta mä oon tosi vähän sitä käyttäny kun se on semmonen puiseva

jotenkin että en mä ainakaan noiden eppujen kanssa ollenkaan että musta on parempi pitää se silleen irti kirjasta (Teacher 2)

(47) Eihän siihen sitä kirjaa edes kannata ottaa kun sit se alkaa ohjaamaan niin paljon et sit harmittaa et ei tuukkaan kalliita kirjoja käytettyä kun menee niiden lasten ehdoilla kun pääpainon pitäis olla siinä leikkimisessä ja kielisuihikutustyyppisessä niin kyllä mä silloin pystyn ihan ite hakeen ne materiaalit (Teacher 6)

(48) Et kun niitä materiaaleja ei oo ni siinä ois se (opettajien välinen) yhteistyö avainasemassa (Teacher 3)

(49) Kaikki ei kokenu sitä (jolly phonics koulutus) et se ois sitä tyyliä mitä he haluaa mutta mä oon tykänny ... mä tykkään niistä mitä mä oon sieltä koulutuksesta saanu sitä semmosta äänne ja siihen se leikki liike ja näitä materiaaleja et musta tuntuu et ne on semmosia mistä lapset tykkää (Teacher 2)

(50) Oon kiitollinen kaupungille noista koulutuksesta ja että ollaan päästy niihin et niitä on tarjottu et kyl niistä on saanu ihan silleen irti ja pystynyt hyödyntään omassa opetuksessa aina sillee vaihtelevasti (Teacher 5)

(51) No ei siinä mielessä (istu omaan opetukseen) koska mä aattelen että se (äänteet) ei oo se olennaisin olennaisin on se et mä lähden niiden lasten kans siitä ympäröivästä maailmasta ja mitä ne tietää siinä elävässä elämässä eikä niinkää mikää schwa-soundi ni mä en ehkä jumittuis siihen en ollenkaan että se lähestymistapa ei mun mielestä ollu paras (Teacher 3)

(52) Jotenkin musta se koulutuksen anti ei oo ihan vastannu sitä mitä mä oisin odottanu semmosia vielä konkreettisempia niinku apuja ja se lähtee se koulutus äänneistä et niinku äänneperusteisesti eikä esimerkiks sanaryhmistä et nyt opetellaan viikonpäivät ja värit vaan että niinku äänne ja minkälaisissa sanoissa se esiintyy et mun mielestä se ei oikein istu eppuluokkalaisille (Teacher 4)

(53) Suomalaisilla tuntuu olevan se lausuminen kynnyskysymys et ei uskalleta puhua ollenkaan jos on pieniki pelko et saattaa sanoo jotain väärin ni sitte siinä jolly phonicsissa ku kiinnitettiin niin paljon huomioon siihen lausumiseen ja äänneisiin ni tuli itelle semmone ristiriita et miten tähän nyt pitäis suhtautua (Teacher 6)

(54) (Toisella paikkakunnalla) aloitettiin ihan kylmiltään et siellä ei ollu mitään koulutusta ni oli vähä just et ku tosiaan siinä on ne eläkeikässä olevat opettajat jotka ei sieltä youtubesta löydä niitä videoita ni en tosiaan tiedä et mitä ne tekee siel tunneilla ... ni täällä olin iha et jes ja vähä hämmästyinki ku siel (toisella paikkakunnalla) oli et kaikki vetää iha kylmiltään ja ku se oli iha oikee et ei ees mikää pilotti (Teacher 6)

(55) Vaikka tämmösiä eri tapoja eri keinoja toiminnallisia tapoja ja ihan tämmösiä käytännön vinkkejä varsinkin tässä kun tää yks kaks tulee niin silloin tarvii vähän sitä et mitä mä voin huomenna käyttää ... sitä täydennyskoulutusta pitäis olla tarjolla sellasta joka tois niitä arjen apuvälineitä ja myöskin sitä ihan kielisisällön et kyllä se olis ihan tarpeen vähän tätä kielitieteellistä pointtia plus sitten sitä pedagogiikkaa ja didaktiikkaa et aika vähäiseksihän se tuppaa jäämään tässä et aika paljon on sen oman innostuneisuuden varassa (Teacher 3)

(56) Ois jotain niinkun vaikka konkreettisia aihekokonaisuuksia miten opetat vaikka niitä viikonpäiviä värejä eläimiä et se ois niinkun lapselle helpompi hahmottaa et joo nyt puhutaan eläimistä ja jotenkin siihen materiaalia (Teacher 4)

(57) Siinä koulutuksessa vois olla sitä vuorovaikutusta opettajien kesken että ideoiden vaihtoo just enemmän monikin voi saada hyviä vinkkejä sieltä kun opettajat keskenään jakaa niitä ideoita (Teacher 1)

(58) Kyllähän niitä tarjotaan mut ehkä se nyt on sitten niinkun aikapula että enemmänkin varmaan voitais hyödyntää tätä meidän keskinäistä ideoiden vaihtoa mutta kyllä se monesti on semmosta hektistä se arki (Teacher 2)

(59) Ja ainainen keskustelu siitä et millon onko ne illalla miten saa sijaista ja kaikkee tätä resurssointia et kyllä siihenkin pitäisi enemmän panostaa kun mitä tää oma kunta on tehnyt (Teacher 3)

(60) Vois aatella et missä aineessa tahansa alakoulua ajatellen pitäis olla tutoropettaja jotka kävis kiertämässä ja et niitä vois konsultoida et vois hyödyntää ja mieltii niitä asioita mitkä on tärkeä osata ku menee seiskalle ni miten niihin lähettäis ihan sieltä alkuopetuksesta tähtäämään niin siinä ne tutorit olis ihan paikallaan joko niin et tulis samanaikasopettajaks tai sit vois käydä konsultoimassa (Teacher 6)

(61) Kyllähän se yksi osa on tätä koulumaailmaa tää kielen oppiminen mutta sitten siellä on paljon muutakin että ei voi niinkun sitä pelkästään painottaa että siellä on paljon muutakin ja mä sanoisin et tänä päivänä käden taidot alkaa oleen huonossa että vähän niinkun aliarvostetussa asemassa (Teacher 1)

(62) Kyllähän se pitää tulla siinä ihan samanlaisena niinku mikä tahansa oppiaine niissä pomopinnoissa että jos sitä opettaa niin sit se pitää myös opettaa opettajille ... pitäähän se kaikille sinne tulla näkyväks muunakin kun vaan sinä omana enkun suorituksenaan et teet yhden kurssin niin et vähän tämmönen lapsilähtöinen näkökulma ni ilman muuta se täytyy sinne saada (Teacher 2)

(63) Kyllä ilman muuta (pitäis okl:n reagoida) koska sillonhan se opettajan todellisuus muuttuu et sitä joutuu enemmän opettaa sitä kieltä luultavasti suurin osa joutuu sitä opettaa niin kyllä siihen pitää kiinnittää huomiota niinku monet muutkin muutokset jotka tuppaa tuleen aina niin että tuleeko ne viimeisenä vasta siellä koulutuksessa kun huomataan että maailma muuttuu (Teacher 3)

(64) Kun tää nyt kerran näin tulee et kielet varhentuu niin kyllä sen ehdottomasti pitää siellä (OKL) olla et se pedagogiikka varmaan myös nimenomaan et miten sitä kieltä opetetaan koska semmonen joka ei erikoistu kieliin ni hän katselee ehkä vähän erilaisin silmin sitä opetusta kun kielenopettaja ja sitä pitäis jotenkin avata sitten kaikille koska kuka vaan voi joutua opettaa sitä (Teacher 4)

(65) Kieltenopettajan tai aineenopettajan koulutus on järjestetty niin että on oma pääaine minkä asiantuntijoita me ollaan sit opiskellaan vuoden verran että miten tullaan opettajaks ja sit se todellisuus on jotain ihan muuta et kyl se lähtökohta tässä kaikessa opettajan työssä olis se et kaikilla olis yhteinen pääaine joka olis se pedagogiikka ja sit valittais se oma polku et oisko se kieliin tai matemaattisiin tai mihin vaan ... Ei oo enää nykypäivää se ajatus et musta tulee

aineenopettaja ja että tiän omasta aineestani kaiken mahdollisen sit tuutkin tänne alakouluun töihin ja kaikki se muu mikä on siis täällä ihan kaikki ni pitää haalia semmosella perse edellä puuhun tyyppisellä ... Onneks meillä on koulussa kauheen ihana yhteistyö mut varmaan jos meillä olis ikäänkun sama pohja niin olis helpompi ku ei olis niinkun kahta eri maailmaa (Teacher 5)

(66) kun on tää varhaiskasvatusta niin on kaikenlaisia leikkijuttuja ja muuta olemassa ja ajatusta semmoseen ni se osaltaan ehkä helpottaa ja rentouttaa sitä ajattelua (Teacher 3)

(67) koulu tukee kyllä tosi hyvin että rokkasua oon saanu vararehtoriltaki ... saa tosi paljon (apua työyhteisöltä) voidaan neuvotella et jos joku haluaa kokee enemmän omakseen tän englannin kielen nii hän saa sitten niitä tunteja ja mä otan sitten jotain muita tunteja tilalle sitte (Teacher 1)

(68) auttaa hirveesti että meillä on hyvät erityisopet ja hyvät ohjaajat ... toki kaikkia resursseja saais olla enemmänkin (Teacher 2)

(69) kyl mä luulen (että saisi apua tarvittaessa) en mä oo sitä aatellu koskaan et mä olin ite ihan innoissaan et jes täälläkin on se enkku ku oli siel toisella paikkakunnalla päässy jo siihen vauhtiin ... mä oon kuitenkin integroinu sen siihen muuhun opetukseen niin en mä tiää onko siitä tullu tai et ei oo semmosta olo et tarvis hirveesti jotai ideoita et enempi on semmonen olo et en ehi kaikkee mitä ajattelen (Teacher 6)

(70) sinänsä koululta ei (oo saanu tukee) et kaupunki on pari kertaa järkäny koulutusta et pieni koulutusriippunen että ei sinänsä oo kyllä evästystä tullu mutta ehkä siinäkin ajan olo muuttuu ja kiinnitetään huomiota mutta ei oo kovin paljoo panostettu (Teacher 3)

(71) ei varsinaisesti tue (koulu varhenuksessa) ei se täällä sillä tavalla esillä oo et tietysti jos mä meen kysymään kielenopettajalta niin varmasti saa apua mut muuten ei oo sillä lailla oikee materiaalia ei meillä oo edes käsikirjaa (Teacher 4)

(72) ei (ollut keskusteluja varhenuksesta) päätettiin et meidän koulu oli mukana se tuli muualta se päätös et ei tullu meidän talon sisältä joka pikkasen harmitti että ei kysytä vaan määrätään (Teacher 4)

(73) no vähän on semmonen että pitäiskö meidän enempi saada tukea sieltä ylhäältä et mitä me saadaan tehdä täällä ja mitä asioita pitäis epulla opettaa tai semmoset suuntaviivat että ollaan niinku löysällä pohjalla tai semmosella niinku hyllyvällä suolla että ei oikein tiää että mitä pitäis opettaa että se niinku haittaa (Teacher 1)

(74) niitä suuntaviivoja ei oikein oo eikä syksyllä ollu oikein niitä tavoitteitakaan eikä oo selkeitä tavoitteita vieläkään opsissa et ihan omat opsit meillä on ... mun mielestä tähän lähetettiin liian nopeesti et sieltä olis ensin pitäny tulla jotkut selkeät tavoitteet ja sitä materiaalia (Teacher 4)

(75) Tietenkin paras opettaja on varmasti se kielen opettaja sen vieraan kielen kannalta mutta kyllä minä katsoisin että luokanopettajakin siitä selviää jos hän on kiinnostunut ja saa riittävästi koulutusta siihen ylipäättään (Teacher 3)

(76) Kyl mä voin syöttää heille niitä sanoja ja fraaseja mutta en pidä itseeni kovin ammattilaisena sen kielen rakenteen ymmärtämisessä onhan meillä tietysti kieleen erikoistuneita luokanopettajia niin toki he varmaan pärjää tosi hyvin (Teacher 4)

(77) Kyl mä uskon et alkuopetuksessa luokanopettajakin pärjää mutta henkilökohtaisesti ajattelen että en halua enää vaikka kolkilla opettaa että mun mielestä pitää lähtee jo semmosen aineenopettajan käsiin joka varmasti osaa sen ääntämisen (Teacher 4)

(78) Lähtökohtaisesti opettajan pitäis tietysti osata sitä kieltä et musta oli hyvä kun mun kaveri toisella paikkakunnalla oli ihan palkattu niinku kielisuihkuttajaks et se käy pitään toisen enkunopen kans ne tunnit kun sitä mä mietin et jos ei oo rahkeita opettaa sitä ni siihen pitäis saada jotain ihan pätevää henkilöö ja kaikista parashan olis jos se olis ihan kielenopettaja mut sit kun pikkusilla pitäis olla ne semmosina tuokioina et luulen et se toimis paremmin mut sit jos niillä on vaan se tunti viikossa ni sithän se ei toimi ... Jos lähtökohtaisesti itellä takkuua ni eihän oppilaiden kustannuksella voi sitä kieltä alkaa ite harjottelemaan ja tosi paljonhan siitä tulee lisätyötä jos sä alat englantia opetteleen siinä sivussa mut sit taas jos on semmoset ihan hyvät lähtökohdat niinku näkisin et itellä vois olla ni vois olla jotain semmosta moniammatillista jotain tilaisuuksia missä sais sit kielenopettajalta visiota siihen et mihin tähdätään ja pyritään (Teacher 6)

(79) Olis kyllä hyödyllistä käydä keskustelua jakaa ideoita ja kuulla heidän (kieltenopettajien) kantaa että meillä ei oikeestaan semmosta keskustelua käyty yhtään (Teacher 2)

(80) Ja se (opettajien yhteistyö) olis avainasemassa (varhennuksen suhteen) niinkun tässä työssä ylipäättään et sehän on avainasemassa niinku koko tän työn kehittämisen ja oman mielekkääksi kokemisen ja työssä jaksamisen ja oppilaiden parhaaksi ja kaikilta kannoilta se yhteistyö aivan olennaista et kyllä mä näkisin et jatkossa pitäis ilman muuta olla enemmän sitä yhteistyötä (Teacher 3)

(81) kyllä mä oon siitä kiinnostunu kyl mä tykkään ja oon nähny sen roolin et se on tärkeä ja se on hyvä että se tulee tänne pienille ... kyllä mä koen et oon ihan tyytyväinen (omaan tasoonsa) tokihan se vaihtelee että joskus tuntuu ettei kerkee valmistella ja et sit joutuu vähän niinku silleen loikkaamaan tavallaan niinku tyhjän päälle mut sitä mä aina ajattelen et me kerrataan eikä se oo paha (Teacher 2)

(82) no se (riittävät työkalut/niiden saanti) on kysymys siitä että oonko mä ite nähny vaivaa siihen että mä oisin ottanu semmosia keinoja ... mä sanon et oisin voinu varmasti tehdä paremminkin asioita mutta sit kun mä aattelen et kun se on laskennallisesti yks tunti viikossa ni ehkä siinä täytyy joku kriteeri kuitenkin ja joskus otan vähä enemmän joskus vähemmän koska ei se sillee mee että se on maanantaiaamuna kello 10 vaan vähän siellä täällä että siinä mielessä ajattelis et oon varmaan tehny ihan hyviä asioita ja ite keksiny jotai leikkejä ja semmosia missä se on tullu et kyllä mä ihan hyvin (Teacher 3)

(83) koitan pitää sen kivana vaihtelen metodeita on leikkiä on laulua välillä katotaa joku enkunkielinen klippi ja on kivoja tehtäviä että se on niinku osa sitä semmosta mukavaa vuorovaikutusta ja koulupäivää et se ei oo et sitä enkkua aletaan opiskelemaan vaan et se tulee siinä huomaamatta eli silloin se suhtautuminen säilyy myönteisenä ja ei tuu kauheesti semmosia kokemuksia et mä en osaa ja tää on vaikeeta ja en halua kokeilla vaan katotaan niitä värejä ja te voitte kattoa ja vertailla kaverin kans ja hei mikä tää on et se säilyis tämmösenä leikinomaisena (Teacher 3)

(84) jos on semmoset ihan hyvät lähtökohdat niinkun itellä on ni (voi hoitaa varhennetun) ja vois olla jotain moniammatillisia tilaisuuksia missä sais sitä kielenopettajan visiota (Teacher 6)

(85) en ole kyllä (saanut työkaluja) et hirveen työn joutuu itse tekemään ja miettimään et mitäs tällä viikolla (Teacher 4)

(86) semmoset kokonaisraamit että mitä siellä vois olla että mitä tavoitellaan tällä kielenopetuksella tavoitteet ja sitte ehkä sisältöjä sinne ja sitte vielä mitä käytössä olevia materiaaleja me voidaan käyttää mikä on laillista nää kolme asiaa (Teacher 1)