

UNIVERSITY OF JYVÄSKYLÄ

**TEACHING ENGLISH IN COMPOSITE CLASSES AT THE
LOWER LEVEL OF COMPREHENSIVE SCHOOL**

A Laudatur Thesis

by

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Tutkielman tarkoituksena on kuvailla englannin opetusta ala-asteella yhdysluokissa osittain erillislukkiin verraten. Materiaalina on ala-asteen englannin opettajille tehty kysely, johon vastasi 18 opettajaa. Koska tarkoituksena on nimenomaan kuvailla opetusta, olivat kaikki kyselyn kysymykset (taustatietoja lukuunottamatta) avokysymyksiä.

Tutkielmassa pohditaan vastauksia kysymyksiin: 1) Millaisia eroja on yhdys- ja erillislukkiin välillä englannin oppituntien eri vaiheissa?, 2) Millainen on tyypillinen englannin oppitunti yhdys-/erillislukassa?, 3) Millaisia eroja yhdys- ja erillislukkiin välillä on eräissä vieraiden kielten opetuksen erityiskysymyksissä?, 4) Mitä etuja ja 5) Mitä ongelmia yhdysluokkaopetus tuo englannin opetukseen?

Suurin ero yhdys- ja erillislukkiin välillä tuntuu olevan yhdysluokkiin ajan puute, joka johtuu siitä, että niissä opettaja joutuu jakamaan aikansa ainakin kahden eri ryhmän kesken. Jotkut opettajat ovat ratkaisseet asian käyttämällä mahdollisimman paljon yhteisiä opetustuokioita (esim. lauluja ja leikkejä, mutta myös sanaston ja/tai rakeiteiden opettamista yhteisesti). Toiset puolestaan käsittelevät yhdysluokan ryhmiä kuin kahta erillislukkaa ja näin kummallekin ryhmälle jää vain puolet opettajan ajasta.

Yhdysluokkaopetus tuo englannin opetukseen selviä etuja. Yhdysluokan oppilaat työskentelevät paljon itsenäisesti ja oppivat siten oma-alotteisemmiksi. Toinen etu on asioiden kertautuminen ja ennalta oppimisen mahdollisuus. Kolmantena etuna voi mainita apuopettajana toimimisen: kun vanhempi/nopeampi neuvoo nuorempaa/hitaampaa, molemmat hyötyvät tilanteesta. Suurin ongelma englannin yhdysluokkaopetuksessa on edellä mainittu ajan puute. Oppiminen jää helposti pinnalliseksi. Lisäksi yhdysluokkaopetus voi olla raskasta opettajalle, koska se vaatii häneltä enemmän sekä oppituntien aikana että tunteja suunniteltaessa.

Yhdysluokkaopetus tuntuu edelleen kärsivän oman opetussuunnitelman ja omien oppimateriaalien puutteesta.

Asiasanat: composite classes, language teaching, multigrade teaching, separate classes

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1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of the present study is to deal with the teaching of English in composite classes at the lower level of comprehensive school in Finland. Kalaoja (1990a:7) reports that even though small schools have been studied to some extent, there has been little research on the processes of multigrade teaching. The present study tries to shed a little light on the matter from the perspective of English. There are lots of teachers who are working with composite classes full time and it is interesting to see what they actually do and how they feel about it. The subject is personally close to the present writer as she has been teaching English in composite classes for over five years.

It seems that the results of a study like the present one may be quite widely applied to other similar groups. Although the groups may be different, there are many features that are typical of composite classes and small schools in general. Kalaoja (1990b:109-110) points out that the results of the studies on small schools in different countries seem to be applicable to other countries as well. The advantages and disadvantages of small schools are the same all over the world. Bell and Sigsworth (1987:1) also report that small (often rural) schools are more similar in different societies than small and larger (often urban) schools within one and the same society.

Teaching composite classes, teaching foreign languages at school and teaching foreign languages in composite classes are dealt with in chapters two, three and four. The second chapter looks at composite classes in general: the background and the features of multigrade teaching and the advantages and disadvantages that it brings into a class situation are the issues that are brought up. How composite classes affect the achievements and attitudes of students and what multigrade teachers think about their work are also dealt with.

Chapter three gives background information on the foreign language classroom today. Teaching English in the primary school is first looked at. This is followed by a brief summary of earlier methods in foreign language instruction and a more detailed description of the communicative approach as it has probably been the most popular method during the 1980s and 1990s. Finally, some special questions related to foreign language teaching are dealt with: the use of the native language, the role of feedback, the basic

skills in foreign language learning and the roles of the teacher and the learner.

The fourth chapter looks at the teaching of English in composite classes. There is plenty of recent literature available concerning foreign language teaching in general whereas it is not so easy to get hold of fresh material on teaching composite classes and it is even more difficult to obtain material on teaching languages in these classes. This is the reason why the first two topics are dealt with separately in more detail and only a relatively short chapter is dedicated to the third topic. Most of the issues discussed in connection with foreign language instruction and multigrade teaching in general are relevant in the language teaching situations in composite classes as well.

The material for the present study was collected in April 1996 by sending a questionnaire to forty lower level English teachers asking about their experiences in multigrade teaching. Chapters five and six deal with the present study and its results. In chapter five the present study is described in more detail, introducing its problems, the informants of the study and the questionnaire used.

Chapter six introduces the results of the present study. Teaching English in composite classes at the lower level is examined on the basis of the answers to the questionnaire. The purpose of the study is to describe the language teaching situation in composite classes as teachers experience it and also to compare it with separate classes. The description includes a typical English lesson in a composite class and its different units, the ways of working in the English classrooms and some other special issues in teaching English at school. The advantages and disadvantages of teaching English in a composite class are also looked at.

The present study is concerned with classes from three to six since Finnish students start English (or some other foreign language) in the third grade. To avoid confusion, the teacher is always referred to as she and the student as he.

2 TEACHING COMPOSITE CLASSES: OVERVIEW

Multigrade classes or split grade classes have students from two or more grade levels and they are taught simultaneously by one teacher (Campbell 1993:346). The terms composite class (Kalaoja 1990a:7) and combined class (Daniel 1988:146) are also used about the phenomenon. In a school with only one teacher there may be as many as six different grades in the same classroom (Laukkanen et al. 1986:128). In a singlegrade or a separate class there are usually students from one age group only.

Composite classes are a common way of instruction in small lower level schools (Yrjönsuuri 1990:4). Thomas and Shaw (1992:1ff) report that multigrade schools, i.e. schools with multigrade classes, are still common in rural and suburban areas of North America and Europe and also in many developing countries. They see them as an efficient means of providing basic education in areas with sparse population and using the available resources effectively. In Finland the majority (about 68 %) of all the lower level comprehensive schools in 1988 were small schools, which means schools that have one to three teachers. Although there are lots of small schools, they cover less than 20 % of all the lower level students. (Primary education in Finland 1988:4.)

Table 1. shows the percentages of combined grades and combined grade students out of all lower level grades and of all lower level students in the different provinces of Finland. Although the figures are quite old, they give a clear picture of where combined grades were and probably still are

Table 1. Percentage of combined grades (I) and percentage of combined grade students (II) in the provinces of Finland in 1976-1977.

	I	II		I	II
Häme	28.2 %	18.8 %	Oulu	34.1 %	24.1 %
Kuopio	49.7 %	33.1 %	North Karelia	62.4 %	44.9 %
Central Finland	43.0 %	28.8 %	Turku and		
Kyme	34.1 %	24.1 %	Pori	40.7 %	29.3 %
Lapland	56.1 %	39.3 %	Uusimaa	20.8 %	15.1 %
Mikkeli	55.6 %	41.1 %	Vaasa	54.1 %	42.5 %

(Pietilä 1978:10)

the most common: in the provinces of Eastern and Northern Finland. These are the parts of the country that are the most thinly populated. Since multigrade schools are quite small, the percentage of students in them is smaller than the percentage of the schools themselves.

Thomas and Shaw (1992:2) define multigrade teaching as "a set of techniques that allow a teacher to deliver effective instruction to groups of students of various ages and capabilities." Kalaoja (1982) distinguishes four systems of multigrade teaching that have been used in Finland. 1) The parallel course system means that every group has the same issues to learn but the older students learn them more profoundly. 2) The alternate course system means that the issues to learn alternate every other year; this can only be applied to subjects where the order of the subject matter is not important. 3) The year course system means that every grade level studies according to its own requirements. 4) The parallel-alternate course system means that the lower combination of grades (e.g. 1 - 2) studies the same issues every other year while the upper combination of grades (e.g. 3 - 4) studies the equivalent issues more profoundly. The year course system is always used in the fundamental subjects, i.e. the mother tongue, mathematics and foreign languages (Laukkanen et al. 1986:90).

Alternatives for having multigrade schools in thinly populated regions are for instance 1) biennial or triennial intakes, which means that new students are admitted to the school every second or every third year only, 2) consolidation, which means closing down schools and 3) using satellite systems. Sometimes grades are combined in order to save costs. (Thomas and Shaw 1992:5-7.)

2.1 The features of composite classes

Composite classes are usually quite small. In 1983-84 the average size of composite classes was 12.5 students while the average size of the separate classes was 23.5 (Laukkanen et al. 1986:126). In order to make teaching possible composite classes must not be big. Campbell (1993:347) points out that there must not be more than 25 students in these groups. If the classes are small enough, the teacher has better chances to guide her students individually (YOO 1981:5). In France, for instance, an effective two grade class is considered to be $N \times 4/5$ students and the equivalent figure for a

three grade class is $N \times 3/4$ students, if the effective size of a single grade is N students (Thomas and Shaw 1992:21).

Table 2. shows the grade combinations in composite classes in Finland from the schoolyear 1983-1984. The commonest combinations are 1 - 2, 3 - 4, 3 - 6 and 5 - 6. In a one-teacher school the only possible combination is naturally 1 - 6, in a two-teacher school combinations 1 - 2 and 3 - 6 or 1 - 3 and 4 - 6 are often used and if there are three teachers in a school, 1 - 2, 3 - 4 and 5 - 6 are the most frequent combinations.

Table 2. Grade combinations in composite classes in 1983-1984
(at the lower level).

1 - 2	35.5 %	3 - 5	0.6 %
1 - 3	2.7 %	3 - 6	17 %
1 - 6	1.1 %	4 - 6	3.7 %
2 - 3	0.5 %	5 - 6	18.1 %
2 - 4	0.3 %	other	
3 - 4	20 %	combinations	0.5 %

(Laukkanen et al. 1986:128)

Multigrade teaching still has no pedagogical or philosophical foundation and therefore it tries to imitate the the practices in separate classes (Kalaoja 1990a:7). Thomas and Shaw (1992:12) include the following features as parts of effective teaching practices in a composite class:

- planning the lessons carefully,
- using peer tutoring,
- using self-directed learning,
- establishing a favourable environment for learning and
- providing regular feedback.

They report, however, that effective practices may vary according to the culture, the subject matter, classroom conditions and the teacher's personality.

Planning the lessons of composite classes can be a challenging task. Because there are more than one grade level, planning is even more important than in separate classes. (Thomas and Shaw 1992:12.)

Students often act as teachers in composite classes. These assistant teachers may help students or groups of students from their own grade or the lower grade. The assistant teacher may for instance guide and check the homework or control that all the assignments are being done and provide help when it is needed. (YOO 1981:27.)

Students often work independently in a composite class. The possibilities that this offers for making instruction more effective must be taken into account in planning the lessons. The older students become, the more responsible they are for their work. Independent work includes individual work as well as other forms of student-centred working. (YOO 1981:23-24.) Thomas and Shaw (1992:15) remark that students must have appropriate material to be able to work independently.

According to Thomas and Shaw (1992:16) a conducive learning environment means that learning can progress "without distractions and interruptions". In order to achieve this there has to be careful preparation of the lessons; everyone has to be kept occupied.

As there is plenty of self-learning in composite classes, the teacher has to make sure that students achieve the goals. She must not forget to give feedback and assess her students regularly. (Thomas and Shaw 1992:16-17.)

Kalaoja (1982:204-226) divides a lesson into four basic sections: 1) the testing of homework, 2) dealing with new material, 3) correction and 4) review. In a composite class, especially in a year course system, the teacher has to have differentiating skills to hear the homework from the different grade levels. When dealing with new material, dividing the time depends on the subject, students and the teacher. In a composite class there is less time per group for teacher-centred instruction. Correction is meaningful if it can be done immediately after the work is finished. In a composite class self-correction is used a lot. As there is little time for review in composite classes, there may be the feeling of unfinished work.

2.2 The advantages of multigrade teaching

There are both advantages and disadvantages in teaching two or more grade levels in the same classroom. Because these groups are usually quite small, it is easier for the teacher to get to know her students better and provide more individual instruction. This works only in relatively small classes, however. The relationship between the teacher and her students can be

close. The atmosphere in these groups is said to be safe and family-like. The relationships between students are usually more friendly than in bigger groups. (Bell and Sigsworth 1987:156ff.) According to Kalaoja (1990b:42-43) there is little unsound competition in a small group. Each student also has more chances to participate in many different ways and take part in responsible tasks. In a small group it is easier to apply the principle of "learning by doing".

Since students have to work alone during at least part of the lesson, they learn to be more independent. Thomas and Shaw (1992:15) also talk about "independent inquiry". They state that multigrade students "learn to learn", which is considered important in teaching lower level students nowadays. When students are working independently they can work at their own pace and they do not have to be afraid of questions (Kalaoja 1982:221).

Students also "learn to teach" when they help the younger ones or peers. This peer tutoring or acting as an assistant teacher can also be used in separate classes but in multigrade teaching it is a necessary prerequisite for efficient learning. It benefits both the tutors and learners. (Thomas and Shaw 1992:5.) Even shy students dare to ask advice from their classmates and at the same time the student who is helping the other gets repetition (YOO 1981:27).

In interacting with each other the older and the younger students both learn some social skills as well. The younger students learn from the older ones and the latter learn to be more responsible by acting as role models. (Kalaoja 1990b:42-43.)

Kalaoja (1990b:43) reports that the students in composite classes learn to concentrate on learning. They have to work on their own even when the teacher is talking to the other group. Sometimes it can be interesting to listen to what is being taught to the other group, however. When the younger students do this, they can learn something beforehand. For the older ones this provides a good chance to revise what they have learnt the previous year.

2.3 The disadvantages of multigrade teaching

As noted above teaching two or more grades simultaneously can also cause problems. Even some of the features that are considered as advantages can be disadvantageous when they are looked at from another perspective.

One problem in multigrade teaching is that there is too little time. The teacher has to divide her time between the groups and therefore there is less time per group available. Interaction between the teacher and a particular student can be limited. (Kalaoja 1990b:72-74.) According to Hogan (1973:278) there is less time for correction. Students often have to use answer sheets and correct their exercises themselves. Hogan (1973:279) also points out that there is little time for review and revision. This can influence especially the slower students' achievements. There is less time per group for testing the homework and even for originally dealing with the new material (Kalaoja 1982:146-147). This may lead to superficial learning.

Because the teacher has to divide her time between the groups, students receive less individual attention. They must often work independently. (Thomas and Shaw 1992:5.) This is seen as advantageous because it promotes students' initiative and responsibility, but there are some problems with it as well. Kalaoja (1990b:52) states that the teacher has few opportunities to control what students are doing and to guide them. There is a danger that some students continuously make a lot of errors without realizing it.

According to Kalaoja (1990b:46ff) it is difficult to differentiate in a multigrade classroom because there are students of so many different ages and abilities. This is especially problematic if the group is big. It may also cause problems if the group is too small. It may be frustrating for the teacher to plan the lessons if there is only one student at a particular grade level. The ways in which students can work are limited in a very little group e.g. it is impossible to assign pair or group work for only one student.

Bell and Sigsworth (1987:107ff) state that composite classes have been accused of not providing enough "significant others" for students. They claim that not only the ones that are exactly the same age are "beneficial significant others" but that the older students are significant others to the younger ones and vice versa. If the groups are very small, there may be too little competition and intellectual stimulation, however.

A big problem in multigrade teaching is that there is not suitable material available. Kalaoja (1990b:29ff) points out that there are no books adapted to the needs of composite classes and not even a curriculum of its own. It means that the teacher has to create a lot of material herself. The equipment may be unsuitable for the purposes of multigrade teaching. Even the school premises may sometimes be in a bad shape. If the goals and the

contents are successfully adapted, it is easier to apply an active methodology which makes students work interestingly and enthusiastically (Ecology and rural education 1995:24).

2.4 The impact of composite classes on student achievement and attitudes

In the 1970s some studies were made on the achievements of the students in composite classes in Finland. Many of these studies were concerned with several subjects including English. Jokinen (1979:23-31) reports that although the results are somewhat contradictory, the differences between composite and separate classes are small. Neither of the two class combinations gives consistently better results. Salomäenpää (1982:7-8) sums up some earlier studies and comes to the same conclusion: some studies have found differences in mathematics but as a whole there seems to be no big variations.

In more recent studies there are contradictory results concerning the impact of composite classes. Campbell (1993:347) reports that multigrades have a negative effect on both attitudes and achievement; especially the weaker students suffer. Stern (1994:53-57) points out that although some studies report quite low academic performances in composite classes, most of the data available does not support this view. Furthermore, a multigrade environment has a positive effect on students' attitudes and behaviour. Thomas and Shaw (1992:5-8) report that there is evidence of higher achievement levels in composite classes (especially in math, languages and science) but that the levels may fall if there is not enough support in the form of suitable materials and teacher training. If the programs are properly implemented, students acquire not only higher levels of achievement but also better social skills. Bell and Sigsworth (1987:115) also state that multigrade students do not perform less well than those in separate classes and that the former have more positive personal and social attitudes than the latter.

2.5 The teacher of a composite class

According to Kalaoja (1990b:61) many multigrade teachers think that their work is flexible, independent and varying. All the teachers in his study considered their work as meaningful and 90 % of them valued their work. Yrjönsuuri (1990:5) reports that the teachers of small schools in general have a more positive view of their working conditions than the teachers of larger schools. There are usually few disciplinary problems in these groups (Kalaoja 1990b:61, Thomas and Shaw 1992:16).

Many multigrade teachers say that their workload is quite heavy. They have more planning to do beforehand and even during the lessons they have to teach and control more than one group simultaneously. (Kalaoja 1990b:44ff.) Thomas and Shaw (1992:5) report that multigrade teaching demands high organisational skills. The teachers need special training and materials to be properly able to implement the programs. Many of the Finnish multigrade teachers feel, however, that they have not had a sufficient training for the job. Furthermore, teachers often have to create material for composite classes because there is none available. (Kalaoja 1990b:44-46). Even though all the teachers in Kalaoja's study (1990b:73) thought of their work as meaningful, 80 % of them thought that it is even more meaningful to work with separate classes. Craig and McLellan (1987:7-8) point out that a multigrade teacher often has to make compromises because it is impossible to teach everything according to curricula. The teacher needs support for deciding what to teach and how to teach it. In addition to teacher training, own curricula have to be planned for composite classes. Consulting other teachers might be one way of dealing with problematic situations (Daniel 1988:153).

3 FOREIGN LANGUAGES IN THE CLASSROOM

In Finland students normally start learning their first foreign language in the third grade, i.e. at the age of nine. For most of the students this means English and it is usually the only foreign language that they study at the lower level. It is possible to start another language in the fifth grade in some municipalities. The National Board of General Education has suggested that this voluntary language should be offered everywhere (Pohjala 1996:9).

3.1 Teaching English to beginners

In the beginning of the third grade there is usually an oral period which may be of various lengths. Students get used to listening to the foreign language and have a chance to speak it and practice pronunciation. (PKO 1983:23.) In the beginning all learning activities take place in the classroom because they cannot be practised alone at home. Consequently there is usually little homework during the beginning stages. (Marton 1988:46.)

According to Dunn (1983:3) children want to use the foreign language without thinking too much about mistakes. They do not have the same inhibitions as adults. In order to be able to practise the language they need to have a chance to take part in meaningful activities in it.

Dunn (1983:26) argues that teachers often use the same lesson framework for each lesson and that this makes students feel safe and calm. Yet he also points out that it is important to have variety in the lessons in the form of different kinds of activities (1983:34).

How one feels in the class is important for a young language learner. Rose (1982:10) talks about "an atmosphere of warmth and creativity" in language learning situations. If the teacher is eager and enthusiastic and the atmosphere is secure, students are also better motivated to learn. Motivation depends on other things as well e.g. if the subject matter is made interesting and if the learner can succeed more than fail, he is better motivated. (Donoghue and Kunkle 1979:51.)

It is difficult to teach in a way that every learner's individual needs are met. It is not efficient to teach the class as a whole all the time either. Rose (1982:109) suggests that it is best to individualize those activities that

can best be done alone such as writing and reading. Furthermore, as situations and learners differ, there cannot be only one teaching method suitable for all situations and learners (Dunn 1983:vi).

Young learners need opportunities for repetition. Dunn (1983:53-54) claims that repetition does not bore younger children in the same way as older and that children in fact enjoy repetition. According to Donoghue and Kunkle (1979:53) studying languages requires overlearning and because of that students need short review every lesson. Repetition can be made more fun if it is realised in the form of games, plays etc.

Games can be used as snacks but they are also effective means of learning/teaching the language e.g. in practising vocabulary and structures. Language learning should be fun and games can make it fun. Therefore they deserve a place in every lesson. (Cross 1992:153-163.) Young learners also enjoy rhymes and songs. They learn these easily and thus even the weakest students feel that they have really learnt something. (Dunn 1983:80.) Songs and rhymes also help students with the prosodic features of the language and give knowledge of the target culture (Cross 1992:164). Dunn (1983:80) suggests that there could be a warming-up period in the beginning of every lesson. This period can consist of a song, a rhyme, a game or a play. It is a good means of promoting the atmosphere and increasing students' motivation.

Students who learn a foreign language at school have limited opportunities to practise it. In order to expose her students to the language as much as possible the teacher must prepare the activities carefully. (Donoghue and Kunkle 1979:51-52.) Careful planning guarantees that no time is wasted.

A question that often arises in connection with foreign languages at school is whether to teach grammar and when to start with it. Dunn (1983:59) claims that young children learn grammar indirectly when they are using the language. Structures do not need to be taught. The other extreme is teaching grammar from the beginning. First structures can be learnt as vocabulary items without explicit explanations and later the rules are explained (PKO 1983:21).

One recent trend in teaching lower level students is the notion of integrated learning and it can also be applied to language teaching. In addition to teaching the basic skills it is important to promote students' own

desires to continuously maintain and develop their language skills independently (Kohonen 1988:195).

3.2 Language teaching methods

Widdowson (1990:157-160) points out that language learning has two sides: knowing and doing. Different approaches to language teaching have emphasized one side or the other. The so-called structural approach focuses on knowing which means that students learn about the language and then they are supposed to know how to use it. Adopting the communicative approach involves concentrating on doing, which means that students are allowed to use the language and thus they also learn about it.

In language pedagogy there have been continuous attempts to improve language teaching by changing teaching methods (Stern 1992:6). Nunan (1991:228) claims, however, that there probably never will be a method which is suitable for all.

The Grammar-Translation Method The Grammar-Translation Method, previously called the Classical Method, was the dominating method in language teaching during the latter half of the nineteenth and the first half of the twentieth century. Today it is sometimes still used in a modified form. (Richards and Rodgers 1986:4.)

The main goal within this method is to be able to read literature. In order to achieve this students translate texts from each language into the other. It is also considered important that students learn about the forms of the language. Grammar is taught deductively which means giving the rules and applying them to examples. (Larsen-Freeman 1986:9-10.)

The Audio-Lingual Method There were attempts to change language teaching even earlier (e.g. the Direct Method at the turn of the century) but a method that really gained popularity, was the Audio-Lingual Method. It was developed in the U.S. during the second world war. Theories behind the method can be found in behaviourist psychology and structural linguistics. (Nunan 1991:229.)

There are lots of oral activities within the Audio-Lingual Method. Spoken language is practised by using dialogues and drills. (Cook 1991:135.) Larsen-Freeman (1986:41-42) reports that students are supposed to overlearn what they are practising. Structures are taught inductively

which means that students try to discover the rules by studying the examples.

Cook (1991:136) points out that many features of the Audio-Lingual Style are still present in language teaching today e.g. the emphasis on spoken language, using dialogues and the division between the four skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing. Nunan (1991:229) claims that Audio-Lingualism has influenced language teaching more than any other method.

Other methods Although Audio-Lingualism brought many new ideas into language teaching, it has also been criticized for some features. In the 1960s transformational grammar and cognitive psychology gave rise to a new method, Cognitive Code Learning (Nunan 1991:232). After that many other new methods have come into existence e.g. the Silent Way, Suggestopedia, Community Language Learning, the Total Physical Response and the Natural Approach (see e.g. Larsen-Freeman 1986, Richards and Rodgers 1986, Brown 1987, Nunan 1991). All of these are not easily adopted in a classroom situation, however.

Today there are two trends to be found in language teaching methodology: 1) eclecticism and 2) variations of communicative language teaching. Eclecticism, which means mixing several methods, has come into existence because none of the separate methods is felt to be good enough alone. Individual teachers are the ones who make decisions about what methods they combine and in what way this is done. (Stern 1992:11.) Cook (1991:148) argues that all methods are partial and thus eclectic in terms of foreign language learning.

In the late 1980s there was an experiment on developing the instruction of the mother tongue and English in Finland. This experiment emphasized the importance of the learner's own experiences in learning. According to Raulamo (1988:5-9) learning has to be rich in experiences and therefore the following prerequisites have to be fulfilled: there has to be safe atmosphere and good relationships between students and the teacher, the teacher has to motivate her students and deal with everything profoundly and the teacher herself has to be well and active.

Communicative language teaching The pedagogy of language teaching that has been the most popular since the 1980s can be described in one word as communicative (Widdowson 1990:117). According to Marton (1988:34) communicative teaching tries to imitate the natural process of

language acquisition in the classroom. This is not anything completely new: similar ideas have been brought up by other methods earlier in the twentieth century. The communicative approach emphasizes the learning of a foreign language by using that particular language. Other strategies are often combined with the communicative ones. (Marton 1988:37-38.)

The terms 'method', 'approach' and 'strategy' are not always used similarly by different researchers. Marton (1988:38) defines 'communicative approach' as the broader one of the concepts. It includes not only a certain teaching strategy but also objectives, methodological principles, typical techniques etc. while 'communicative strategy' of language teaching is only a certain teaching procedure (the leading one) within this approach. According to Richards and Rodgers (1986:28) a 'method' contains approach, design and procedure. The 'approach' includes theories about language and language learning, the 'design' deals with objectives, learning and teaching activities and the roles of the teacher, students and materials and the 'procedure' is what actually happens in the classroom (teaching techniques, classroom practices and behaviours). Furthermore, they (1986:83) claim that communicative language teaching (CLT) is rather an approach than a method.

There are scientific and pedagogical sources which have influenced the concept of communicative language teaching. Firstly, since the early 1970s the view of language learning has been more and more social and semantic. Secondly, research on foreign language learning has put more emphasis on the learner than before. Thirdly, also the new curriculum approach takes into account the learner's needs and the functions of language. So the curriculum approach is based on content rather than form. And finally, there has been changes in classroom treatments in the form of individualization, group work and humanistic techniques. The communicative approach also includes many characteristics of the earlier methods. (Stern 1992:11-13.)

The goal of the communicative approach is communicatively competent students (Larsen-Freeman 1986:131, Richards and Rodgers 1986:66, Brown 1987:212). According to Larsen-Freeman (1986:131) this means that they are able to use the language appropriately in different social contexts.

In order to make students able to achieve communicative competence the teacher has to create situations in which students can

interact a lot. They must have opportunities to express their own ideas and opinions. (Larsen-Freeman 1986:129-133.) The situations have to be close to normal life situations (Brumfit 1984:69). Students learn to communicate by using language spontaneously in unplanned contexts (Brown 1987:212, Marton 1988:38). It is important that students also hear authentic language as much as possible (Larsen-Freeman 1986:129, Brown 1987:212).

In communicative classrooms language functions are more important than forms. Therefore less attention is paid to grammatical rules. (Brown 1987:212.) Marton (1988:38) says that no grammar explanations and exercises or drills or grammar tests are used. Grammar is supposed to be learnt as a by-product. Fluency is considered more important than accuracy also by Brown (1987:212). However, Larsen-Freeman (1986:129) suggests that success is measured by both fluency and accuracy.

The role of the teacher within the communicative approach is a little different from what it has traditionally been. According to Marton (1988:39) the teacher's role is to organize interactional activities and provide suitable input for students and also give feedback. Brumfit (1984:74-78) reports that the teacher cannot control all the groups all the time but she has to check that the goals are achieved. Larsen-Freeman (1986:131-133) sees the teacher as a facilitator, an advisor and sometimes a co-communicator in addition to the role of the manager of classroom activities.

As the teacher is not the only one speaking in a communicative classroom, it means that there is a lot of groupwork. Working in small groups (or pairs) gives more possibilities for producing and receiving language. It is a way of increasing the quality of language practice and it also gives more opportunities for feedback. The setting may also feel more natural than a normal class situation. Furthermore, it helps individualization. (Brumfit 1984:75-77.) When these small groups or pairs are working, the teacher is walking around, listening to what students are saying and giving help if it is needed (Marton 1988:39).

According to Richards and Rodgers (1986:80) there is a wide variety of activities and types of exercises that can be used in a communicative classroom. Marton (1988:39) reports that most of the classtime is spent on different speaking activities. Information gaps and problem solving activities are used. Larsen-Freeman (1986:131) also mentions games and roleplays in addition to problem solving tasks.

Communicative principles can be used in the teaching of any skill at any level (Richards and Rodgers 1986:80). It is the type of activities and the source of input that vary from level to level. Therefore the strategy is used in its purest possible form with the beginners. The pure form is, however, not recommended in schools because students have to reach certain levels of accuracy there. Especially if there are only three or four lessons a week the pure form does not work properly. (Marton 1988:46-54.) Finnish students usually have two lessons per week throughout the lower level. If the communicative approach is to be adopted, there are some issues that require special attention beforehand: teacher training, the development of the materials, testing and evaluation (Richards and Rodgers 1986:83).

3.3 Special issues in teaching foreign languages

There are lots of questions that the different methods or approaches have answered differently. In this chapter some of these issues are dealt with briefly: the position of the mother tongue, the importance of feedback, the roles of the four skills (listening, speaking, reading and writing) and the ways of working in the language classroom.

One question that has been answered differently during different times is whether the mother tongue can be used in teaching the second language and if it can, to what extent this is possible. Larsen-Freeman (1986:12, 44) reports that mostly the native language is used in the Grammar-Translation method whereas only the target language is used in the classroom in the Audio-Lingual method.

As the purpose of communicative language teaching is to learn to communicate in the foreign language, it is natural that this language, and not the mother tongue, is used in the classroom. Marton (1988:38) suggests that the target language is also used in classroom management. According to him the only exceptions to using the foreign language are native language equivalents that the teacher may rarely provide. Cross (1992:237) remarks that using the foreign language as the management language gives opportunities for its meaningful use and if the mother tongue is used instead, students get the impression that the foreign language is not meant for natural communication.

Another question to be answered in language teaching is how to treat students' errors. The Grammar-Translation Method considered it important

that students get the correct answer and in the Audio-Lingual Method students' errors were to be avoided altogether if possible (Larsen-Freeman 1986:12,45). Some researchers make a distinction between errors and mistakes. Cross (1992:69) says that an error means applying a wrong rule whereas when a learner makes a mistake, he can usually self-correct because he knows the rule.

Today errors are seen as an inevitable part of language learning and an evidence of positive development (Cross 1992:68-69). Larsen-Freeman (1986:129) points out that errors are natural and they (especially errors of form) are tolerated in a communicative classroom. Errors are usually accepted if the meaning is clear. This means that they may be totally ignored or they may be corrected in an indirect way e.g. by using an expansion: the teacher repeats the student's expression in a correct form and probably expands it. (Marton 1988:38-39.) Cross (1992:70) suggests that corrections must always be made "with discretion, sensitivity and appropriacy". The teacher rarely interrupts students but she may write down some persistent errors and comment on them later. However, it may be difficult not to provide corrections in the classroom as the learners often expect immediate feedback (Nunan 1991:198).

A lot of the feedback comes from the teacher but also the classmates provide it in the course of group or pair work. The learner gets positive feedback whenever his partners are able to understand him. (Marton 1988:42.) Cross (1992:69) points out that positive feedback is more effective than negative one. The teacher may offer it for instance by nodding or smiling or by saying something encouraging. Positive reinforcement was emphasized by the audio-lingualists as well (Larsen-Freeman 1986:41).

The division into four basic skills (listening, speaking, reading and writing) has also been dealt with differently during different times. In the Grammar-Translation Method the emphasis is on written communication and no or little attention is paid to listening and speaking (Larsen-Freeman 1986:10, Richards and Rodgers 1986:3). The Audio-Lingual Method emphasizes the oral/aural skills and advises that the four skills are to be taught in the "natural order": listening, speaking, reading and writing (Larsen-Freeman 1986:44).

In today's communicative classroom all four skills are practised from the beginning (Larsen-Freeman 1986:134). As Cross (1992:244) points out listening is important because we have to understand what the others say if

we want to take part in the interaction. Both listening and reading offer students the input they need in order to learn new words. Cross (1992:268) also points out that although writing is no longer considered so important, it still has a significant role in schools, especially in examinations. A basic feature of the communicative classrooms is, however, that students *use* the language both productively and receptively in different situations (Brown 1987:212).

Finally there is the question of the different ways of working in language teaching. Language classrooms have traditionally been quite teacher-dominated. Although spoken language is emphasized in the Audio-Lingual Method, the teacher is the dominating figure in the classroom (Cook 1991:138). Cross (1992:49) states that the teacher-controlled approach is common in many societies and it may be difficult to change the situation. It is important to do this anyway because students must have more opportunities for interaction.

Thomas and Shaw (1992:12) report that the two options in managing the classroom, i.e. 1) the teacher or 2) the student is the leader of the learning process, depend on materials, on the teacher and her abilities and on what is acceptable in the particular culture. Within the communicative approach the teacher is no longer so dominating (Cook 1991:140). There is lots of groupwork and working in pairs and this makes interaction between students possible (Marton 1988:46). If the student is seen as the leader, it is more possible for the teacher to create an environment where learning can easily take place (Thomas and Shaw 1992:12).

Kohonen (1988:34) emphasizes the role of the learner as an active participant in the activities. By using drama in foreign language instruction the teacher makes sure that students have opportunities to use the language in situations that are close to real life. In teaching foreign languages the principle "learning by doing" means that the learner obtains own experiences of using the language and his skills develop through these experiences (Ryhänen 1988:139).

4 TEACHING LANGUAGES IN COMPOSITE CLASSES

There are usually students from two (rarely three) grade levels in the language groups of small schools. The biggest problem is dividing the time between the grade levels in order to guarantee that the goals are achieved. (PKO 1983:43.) The goals and also the skills that are practised are the same as in separate classes (YOO 1981:40). The National Board of General Education has suggested that in foreign languages, as well as in mathematics, the mother tongue and the second national language, each student has to have a chance to progress according to the requirements of his own grade level (Yrjönsuuri 1990:4).

4.1 English lessons in composite classes

It is important to organize the instruction of composite classes in such a way that the programmes of the two grade levels are articulated with each other. This is done by listing the situations, themes and structures that can be dealt with simultaneously and by listing the matters that must be dealt with separately. A more detailed plan of what to teach and how to teach it is naturally necessary as well. (YOO 1981:40-41.)

An example of a foreign language lesson in a composite class is given in Appendix 1. The order of the different stages may vary inside the grade level and between the grade levels. Also the order of dealing with different matters may vary within these stages. There is not always time for everything that is listed in the example. (PKO 1983:83.)

In order to create a favourable atmosphere for studying there should be a peaceful warming-up period in the beginning of each lesson. It is also important to make both groups aware of the goals of the lesson. It is a good way to end the lesson by bringing both groups together again. The starting and ending together and other shared sections of studying make the lesson more harmonious. The shared sections may act as repetition for the upper class and the lower class learns something new. (PKO 1983:43-44.) It is easier to take the need for repetition into account if teaching is carried out by using common themes (Laukkanen et al. 1986:132).

In a composite class students are supposed to work independently part of the time. While the teacher is working with one grade, for instance dealing with a new text or a structure, the other grade works in small groups

or in pairs or individually (YOO 1981:41). The students in these classes often learn to be more social and independent but it may be harmful that there is not much time for active listening and oral practice. The teacher must think about this when she is planning lessons and not guide her students to do quiet work if there is a chance to work orally. (PKO 1983:43.) Laukkanen et al. (1986:150) also point out that there has often been too little oral practice in composite classes. The two important things that have to be considered are how to make the independent work of the students more effective and how to develop the oral skills of the students.

In the example of a foreign language lesson in a composite class (Appendix 1) the activities that are done with the teacher, for instance dealing with the old or a new text or a new structure, and independent work, for instance doing or checking exercises, are alternating in the plans of the two groups. Daniel (1988:150) recommends the use of grouping in a language class e.g. in the following activities: reading and writing individually, practising dialogues or short guided discussions in pairs, listening to easy material or project work in bigger groups. Some activities need to be done under the teacher's guidance e.g. dealing with new material, having dialogues with an adult (the teacher), singing, presentations, cultural activities, telling stories and most of the listening exercises. It is important to have a balance between these whole-class and independent activities.

4.2 Improving the quality of English instruction in composite classes

In the 1970s there was an experiment on teaching English in composite classes in Kangasala and it was continued in Nousiainen. It was especially concerned with the questions of carrying out the programs of two grade levels so that they are articulated with each other as often as possible, increasing oral practice, using the older students as assistant teachers and getting students used to independent work. On the basis of the experiment a co-ordinate year course plan was created: 1) situations, themes and structures that are possible to teach simultaneously to both grade levels were listed, 2) issues that have to be dealt with separately were listed and 3) the actual year course plan was made. It included the ways of working and the materials that are used during the shared sections, the methods and the materials that are used during the separate sections, extra materials, matters

that are emphasized and instructions on how the teacher acts with each of the grade levels. (YL 1980:72-73.)

On the basis of the experiment the following questions are recommended to be taken into account in teaching English to composite classes (YL 1980:74-76):

- the order of dealing with some matters has to be changed as compared with separate classes,
- students are trained to help each other and to act independently as a group,
- opportunities for oral practice must be increased and
- composite classes need lots of recorded and other material especially for the needs of independent work.

Consequently, materials and equipment must be developed to match these needs. Although the experiment was conducted twenty years ago, many of the problems within multigrade teaching still remain the same. For instance there is still little material available for the specific needs of composite classes.

Daniel (1988:149-150) reports of some solutions that have been made in order to improve the quality of teaching languages in composite classes. Firstly, the curriculum could be redesigned in a way that the programs use topics or themes as the starting point. Composite classes have had no curricula of their own so far. Secondly, if changing the curriculum is too impractical, different ways of organizing the classroom could be used. Teaching each group of the combined class separately in turns is in fact a practice that is used in Finland as well. Finally, if the teacher does not prefer any permanent arrangements, she may want to use the principles of cooperative learning through which older or faster students can help the younger or slower ones.

Integrated learning, which has recently become a popular phenomenon at the lower level, includes for instance following features: students' initiative, "learning by doing", learning from the classmates, joint responsibility of learning, independence (acting without control) and self-evaluation (Kohonen 1988:190). All of these are easy and even necessary to adopt in multigrade teaching because students are often working alone or in groups there. Student-centred forms of working help to achieve the goals (YOO 1981:40).

5 THE BACKGROUND OF THE PRESENT STUDY

The aim of the present study is to look at the teaching of English in composite classes at the lower level of comprehensive school in Finland and also compare it with separate classes in some respects. The problems to study are: 1) whether there are differences between these two combinations in carrying out different lesson units, 2) what are typical English lessons like in the two combinations, 3) whether there are differences in the ways in which the groups work and in some special issues in foreign language instruction: the basic skills, the use of the mother tongue, the role of feedback and the realization of the oral period, 4) what kind of advantages multiple grade teaching brings into the teaching of English and 5) what problems there are connected with it.

The study is carried out from the teacher's point of view because teachers are the only persons who can compare the two combinations. Students usually have experiences of only one or the other of the systems. A survey using a self-completion questionnaire was chosen as the method because it was felt to be the best way to reach a suitable amount of teachers and it was the most suitable way for a study of this scale: quick and not too expensive. In carrying out the survey the stages suggested by Cohen and Manion (1980) were followed except for the fact that no pilot study was used.

In this chapter some background information is given on the teachers and their education and experience. Their classes are also described briefly: the grade combinations and the class sizes are looked at. Finally, the questionnaire by which the information was collected is also presented.

5.1 The informants

In order to reach lower level English teachers some addresses were needed and they were available from the Trade Union of Education in Finland. The problem was how to reach those teachers who teach both composite and separate classes. No such information was available from the source in question. The questionnaire was sent to forty teachers whose main schools were the smallest. The small size of the schools was supposed to guarantee that there are composite classes in those schools.

Eighteen of the teachers returned the questionnaire, which is quite a good amount because the date of sending the questionnaire (mid-April) was probably not good as teachers already had examinations to prepare and correct.

All the eighteen teachers who returned the questionnaire are so called ambulant teachers, i.e. teachers who teach in several schools. Fifteen of them are female and only three of them are male. Most of the teachers who answered the inquiry are 41 - 50 (eleven) or 51 - 60 (six) years of age. Only one is under 40.

Consequently, all of these teachers have quite a long experience as teachers: 11 - 35 years, of which time they have been teaching English for 10 - 29 years (except for one person who only has taught English for 3 years). Some of these teachers teach only at the lower level, others teach both at the lower level and other classes, as well. Sixteen of these teachers teach both composite classes and separate classes at the moment. The two persons who only teach composite classes also have previous experience of teaching separate classes.

The education of the teachers is quite similar as sixteen of them are subject teachers and two are both subject teachers and grade teachers. There are only two among these teachers who lack the formal education of a subject teacher. The majority (thirteen) of the teachers have had English as their major subject at the university and the rest have had some other language as their major (Swedish - two, German - two and French - one). It is the minor subjects that differ a lot. They include for instance English (for those who have not had it as their major), other languages, linguistics, pedagogics, literature etc.

The commonest class combinations that the teachers in the present study teach are 3 - 4 and 5 - 6, which are the combinations most often used in Finland. Some other combinations have been exceptionally in use during some schoolyear, such as 2 - 3 (an experiment), 3 - 4 - 6, 3 - 5 - 6, 4 - 5, 4 - 5 - 6 and 4 - 6. These exceptions have mostly been used in the smallest schools in order to keep the sizes of the classes as equal as possible. Sometimes there may even be age groups with no members in them.

The group sizes seem to vary a great deal. The reported sizes of composite classes vary between 2 - 23 students while the sizes of separate classes are said to vary between 3 - 28. Sometimes the groups are divided during one lesson per week and combined during the other lesson. Although

separate classes in general are supposed to be a lot larger than composite classes and there are quite large separate groups in some schools, there seems to be a lot of small separate groups as well: the average size of both combinations in the present study is about the same (about 10.6 students in composite classes and about 10.9 students in separate classes).

As regards teaching materials, *OK English* seems to be used in many schools. Fifteen of the teachers in the present study use *OK English* and two of them use *Follow me* and one of them uses *Express*. Two teachers of the latter three have previously used *Jet Set* but are now gradually moving on to the new series mentioned above.

5.2 The questionnaire

The material for the present study was collected by using a questionnaire (Appendix 2). It consists of five pages and three sections (A - C). There are questions about the background of the teachers and their classes in section A.

Section B includes descriptions about the differences between composite and separate classes in teaching English at the lower level of comprehensive school. First the teachers were asked to think about the differences between these two combinations considering different lesson units. Then they were asked to describe a typical English lesson in each of the combinations. They were also asked about the patterns of working, the four skills in language learning (listening, speaking, reading and writing), the position of the mother tongue, the importance of feedback and the oral period in the third grade and whether there are differences in these between the two combinations.

Section C is concerned with the advantages and problems that there are in teaching English to a composite class. The teachers were asked to consider these and also to write down the best and the most negative aspects in multiple grade teaching from the teacher's point of view. They were also supposed to consider which of the two combinations is more meaningful and whether they think that languages should always be taught in separate classes.

Sections B and C consist of open questions because the purpose of the present study is only to describe the teaching of English in a composite class and the differences that there are between composite and separate

classes. No statistical calculations are made concerning the matter. By answering open questions the teachers could better describe the matters that they were asked about. Constructing the questionnaire and forming the questions were based on the instructions by Cohen and Manion (1980).

6 TEACHING COMPOSITE CLASSES IN FINLAND

In this chapter the results of the present study are presented. Dealing with a new text, making questions about the homework, teaching structures, oral exercises in pairs, listening exercises, exercises on vocabulary and structures, checking the exercises, practising pronunciation, games, plays, songs and rhymes, using extra material and using the computer were elements of an English lesson that the teachers were asked about. These are described one by one and compared with their use in separate classes. After that typical English lessons in both separate and composite classes are introduced and compared with each other. Some special issues in teaching English at school are looked at next. Finally, the advantages and disadvantages of teaching English in composite classes are dealt with.

6.1 The units of the English lessons in composite and separate classes

In question 1 (section B) the teachers were asked to think about what kind of differences there are in carrying out the various units of a lesson in teaching composite and separate classes both from the teacher's and the student's point of view. They were also asked to estimate how much time is used in each of these lesson units within two consecutive lessons. The question of the time was only answered by about a third of the teachers. It was probably not noticed or it was felt to be too difficult to answer. The exact time spent on each activity is perhaps not possible to give as it varies a lot from lesson to lesson. The purpose of asking about the time used on various lesson units was to be able to compare the time in composite and separate classes. This might have been done by just asking the teachers to compare the time between the two combinations roughly - more or less time used for each of the units.

The lesson units in the present study were chosen using *OK English* as the starting point since the present writer has experiences of her own of that particular book. As noted above it also seems to be the book that is most widely used at the lower level at the moment. The units that a lesson consists of are basically the same regardless of the material that is used, however. One particular lesson usually contains only part of these units; not all of them are used during every lesson. Some of them may never be used by some teachers. They may naturally be used in different order by different teachers and even by one and the same teacher.

The basic lesson units are considered to be the following:

- 1) Dealing with a new text. The third grade begins with the oral period but after that *OK English 3 - 6* all have numbered chapters, each of which may take about two lessons if the teacher thinks it is necessary to go through all of them.
- 2) Asking questions about the homework. *OK English 3 - 6* have some material for this but teachers may also carry it out by using their own materials (in writing) or just asking about the homework orally.
- 3) Teaching structures. *OK English 3 - 4* have little grammar in them but in the fifth and especially in the sixth grade structures are dealt with explicitly.
- 4) Doing different exercises. Each chapter in the *OK English* exercise book usually consists of oral exercises that are meant for pair work, listening exercises, exercises on vocabulary and structures (in writing) and some extra exercises.
- 5) Checking the exercises. *OK English* has a key (a book with the right answers); whether it is used or not depends on the teacher.
- 6) Practising pronunciation. There are some special pronunciation exercises in the *OK English* practise books.
- 7) Games, plays, songs and rhymes. There are plenty of various activities in both the *OK English* exercise books and the study books in connection with the chapters.
- 8) Using extra material. Something extra may be used by some teachers if there is anything available.
- 9) Using the computer. Some schools have computers and special English programs in them, others may not be as lucky.

In the following the different units of a lesson are dealt with one by one to discover possible differences between composite and separate classes. Some of the teachers also described what they actually do in class

during the various parts of a lesson. One teacher did not answer this question at all and one only answered it by estimating the time spent on various units. Thus only sixteen teachers answered this particular question.

6.1.1 Dealing with a new text

There are differences between individual teachers in dealing with a new text. Some of the teachers write that there are no or at least no great differences in this between composite and separate classes. Nevertheless many of the teachers find some differences between these two combinations.

A new text is most often introduced in every other lesson. Some of the teachers describe how they deal with a new text. The basic stages are listening to the text, translating it into Finnish and repeating it (or reading it aloud). Some stages such as acting out the text or discussing on the basis of it are mentioned in connection with separate classes only. In a composite class questions about the text may be asked in pairs.

The differences that are reported by the teachers are the following: in a composite class

- students often familiarize themselves with the text either beforehand, i.e. at home, or during the lesson,
- the text may be divided between two lessons,
- the text is not always translated as a whole or at all together with the teacher,
- the text is seldom repeated or read aloud together with the whole class - students may practise reading by themselves or with the help of a tape recorder,
- there is less time for oral practice: less time to discuss the text, to practise pronunciation, to act out the text etc. with the teacher,
- only structures and the most difficult matters are looked at together with the teacher; a new structure may be left till later; students find out about many things by themselves and
- everything is dealt with more quickly than and not so profoundly as in separate classes because there is less teacher time available per group.

As can be seen from the above statements the teacher's role in composite classes is a lot smaller than in separate ones if one thinks about one particular grade level. Quite a lot of the work is done independently by the students. One teacher alternates with the groups in such a way that every

other text is dealt with the teacher and every other text is worked on in pairs. Some of the teachers report that they use pair work in singlegrade teaching as well but others write that all the stages in dealing with new texts are often done together with the teacher in separate classes. If they use pair work the teacher controls the work all the time. In a separate class dealing with a new text often progresses without interruptions.

Those who estimate the time spent on dealing with a new text report that 10 - 20 minutes (one teacher: 40 minutes) is used on it during two consecutive lessons. The actual time spent on a new text is about the same in each of the two combinations. Only the time spent on it together with the teacher is usually shorter in composite classes than in separate ones because the teacher has to deal with two texts in the former instead of just one.

6.1.2 Checking the homework

The next lesson unit to be described was asking questions about the homework. Teachers have different ways of checking that students have done their homework, which here means studying the old text with its new words and possibly structures. There was a separate question about checking the exercises in the questionnaire. Almost all of the teachers think that there are differences in the testing of homework in composite and separate classes.

The old text may be checked orally or in writing. The latter alternative usually means word tests, which are used by some of the teachers either occasionally or on a regular basis.

Asking questions about the homework in a composite class is often said to be quick since there is not much time to waste. Therefore there is seldom time to discuss the homework, only to ask the words or just part of them and possibly the structure sentences. Some teachers report that the only thing they have time for in composite classes are word tests. In a separate class checking the homework is usually much more thorough: not only the words and the structures but also the contents of the old text are dealt with and there is time to act out the text once again, discuss the contents and practise the text orally. One teacher reports that while she only uses word tests in composite classes, she has time to do more than that in separate classes: ask words and whole sentences and even ask students to translate the text into Finnish again.

Some teachers report that they use lots of pair work in checking the homework in composite classes. This means that for instance words are asked by students in the same grade level or by older students. Sometimes even the younger students may be the ones who do the checking. One teacher is worried about students asking questions about the homework between themselves as she thinks it may be superficial and that students easily make a habit of not doing their homework properly if the teacher does not check it. This is possibly one reason why so many teachers seem to use word tests in composite classes more than in separate ones.

Those teachers who estimate the time spent on checking the homework report that 5 - 15 minutes (one teacher: 20 minutes) is used on it during two lessons. In composite classes the teacher's time spent on checking the homework is usually shorter than in separate ones but if pair work is added to it, the time is about the same.

6.1.3 Teaching structures

There are also differences between individual teachers in the teaching of structures. The two extremes in the matter are 1) structures are not taught at all, at least not at the lower level or 2) grammar is taught explicitly from the beginning. Most teachers probably fall somewhere in between these extremes, for instance one of them reports that teaching structures is minimal and no explanations are given, while quite a few of them seem to consider structures quite important. About one third of the teachers feel that there are no or no significant differences between composite and separate classes concerning the teaching of structures.

If structures are taught at all at the lower level, they are most often taught inductively, i.e. the teacher gives some examples and students try to find out the rules by studying the examples. After that the rules are looked at together and finally the structure is practised. Some of the teachers report that the techniques in teaching structures are the same in both class combinations.

The biggest difference between composite and separate classes is the time. Some of the teachers report that they use less time for teaching structures in the former while others feel that structures are so important that they deserve the same amount of time in both. In separate classes teaching structures is felt to be more thorough and more unhurried, however. There is

even time to practise structures orally with the teacher, not just to go through the rules.

In composite classes students often practise the new structures individually (in writing) or in pairs (orally). Because the teacher does not have enough time to control what they are doing, there is a danger that especially the oral exercises are not done properly. The older students may act as assistant teachers and help the younger ones with the new structures and get some repetition at the same time. This is good because there is usually no time for revising the structures with the teacher.

The time spent on dealing with structures is reported to be 10 - 15 minutes (one teacher: 2 - 5 minutes) during two lessons. As noted above some of the teachers spend less time on structures in composite classes but others spend as much time on them as in separate classes. The time used depends more on the teacher than the class combination.

6.1.4 Oral exercises in pairs

Speaking is one of the four basic skills that are practised in foreign language learning and it is considered important within the communicative approach. Oral practice may be carried out with the teacher or in pairs. Texts in the textbook may be used as the basis for discussion. The teacher may also have some extra material or she may create some for these purposes. Yet it seems that it is the practice book with its oral exercises that is most often used in both composite and separate classes.

About a third of the teachers report that there are no differences between composite and separate classes in oral practice. For instance one of these especially points out that there is exactly the same amount of it during every lesson in both classes. Some teachers point out that it depends on the group in general what kind of oral practice is used and how much it is used. The exercises that are used when students are working in pairs are usually used in the same way in both class combinations.

Many of the teachers feel that there is little time for oral practice in composite classes as it is difficult to carry it out in the circumstances. This may be true but only if one thinks that students are not able to work independently. The teacher has little or no time to control or help with what students are doing and students have to count on their own initiative. In a separate class oral practice is more controlled and guided as the teacher may

provide help when it is needed. Some teachers write that because of this singlegrade students learn to communicate better in the foreign language.

Many teachers think that students in composite classes need a separate room for practising oral skills. However, controlling is even more difficult then and students themselves are responsible for doing what they are supposed to be doing. If the group who is working in pairs stays in the same room, there is often so much noise that it makes concentrating hard or even impossible for both of the groups.

The time spent on oral activities varies between 5 - 15 minutes (one teacher: 3 minutes) during two lessons. Some of the teachers especially point out that there is no difference in the time allowed to composite and separate classes, as learning to speak the language is so important. As noted above others feel that there is little time for this practice in composite classes.

6.1.5 Listening exercises

Listening is another one of the four basic skills that are practised in foreign language learning. In order to be able to communicate a person has to understand what the others are saying. Students learn to listen to English by listening to the teacher and other students. Texts from the textbook are also often listened to but there are also some special listening exercises in the practice books.

Most of the teachers report that there are no differences in the actual realization of listening exercises between composite and separate classes. The common way to proceed is that the teacher uses the tape recorder and stops it whenever it is necessary.

The only distinctive factor is the same as in many other areas: time. Some of the teachers write that they try to take every listening exercise in both composite and separate classes since there are not too many of them in the exercise books altogether. Others report that they have not enough time to do all the listening exercises or even part of them in composite classes. As separate classes have more time for listening, some teachers feel that students in them do better in listening comprehension tests.

Some of the teachers have managed to avoid the problem that the teacher does not have time to operate the tape recorder. They write that students may listen at least to the easy exercises by themselves. This usually

means that there has to be two tape recorders if the teacher needs one with the other group at the same time. Even then it is not always possible for students to work without the teacher as it may be impossible for them to know at what points to stop the tape.

It is possible that in composite classes the group who is listening to something independently disturbs the other group who is working with the teacher or vice versa. This is also true in the situation where one group is doing listening exercises with the teacher and the others are doing silent work.

The teachers who have estimated the time that they spend on listening exercises report that 3 - 10 minutes is used during two lessons. One teacher has a figure of 40 minutes but it probably includes all the listening, not just the actual listening exercises. As noted above, less time is in general used on listening exercises in composite classes although the teachers try to do as many of them as possible.

6.1.6 Exercises on vocabulary and structures

Students have quite a lot of written exercises in their practice books. Most of these written exercises deal with words from the new text or with the new structures and there may also be some optional or extra exercises for the quickest students. Some teachers may sometimes use extra material that they have found somewhere or created themselves for the whole class or just for the fastest students.

A few teachers feel that composite and separate classes do not differ in doing exercises in writing. They write that both do the same amount of the exercises and the most important ones are done under the teacher's control.

The main difference between composite and separate classes in using the written exercises is that in the former there is more time for these during the lessons. Many of the teachers report that they use these exercises as silent work for one half when the other half is working with the teacher. Many of them also point out that written exercises are only done as homework by the students in separate classes. If they are done during the lessons, the teacher is always available in case someone needs help, which is not the case in composite classes. Also in composite classes the slowest

students get some written exercises as homework but it may be that the quickest ones get ready with everything during the lesson.

Although some teachers report that students in composite classes work on written exercises for most part of the lesson, others point out that they only do selected parts of the exercises. One teacher is worried about the consequence of getting used to "reading one's own speech" from the practice book or the notebook.

The time spent on written exercises is reported to be 10 - 15 minutes (one teacher: 5 minutes) during two lessons. However, in many separate classes practically no class time is spent on these exercises.

6.1.7 Checking the exercises

Students usually want to have some kind of feedback on what they have been doing. As noted above, written exercises are done during the lessons or at home. Both homework and exercises that have been done at school need to be checked in order to avoid too many persisting errors.

Only one of the teachers thinks that composite and separate classes are similar if one considers checking the exercises. The actual error correction itself may be the same in these two if it is the teacher who does the correcting. Most of the teachers report, however, that students in composite classes often correct their errors themselves by using the "key" (the book with the right answers) as the model. Only the most important exercises are checked together with the teacher if there is time. The teacher may also go around and look quickly at the exercises which require own production. One teacher writes that the composite class of grades 5 - 6 check their exercises themselves and that of grades 3 - 4 always checks theirs with the teacher. It is possible to use some of the students as assistant teachers and let them lead the correction. With the actual self-correction there is the danger of not doing it properly. Therefore the teacher should occasionally have a look at students' practice books and notebooks.

There is more time for checking together in separate classes and this is also what seems to happen there quite often. Many teachers write that exercises are checked together for instance by writing them on the blackboard. Some teachers feel that it is not essential to check everything in separate classes either. In these classes it is possible to give more alternatives if there are more than just one right answer.

The time spent on correction is reported to be 5 - 10 minutes during two lessons. For composite classes this usually means self-correction while the teacher is often the dominant figure in checking the exercises in separate classes where they are usually checked orally or with the help of the blackboard.

6.1.8 Practising pronunciation

The views on teaching pronunciation vary from teacher to teacher. Some of the teachers do not teach it as a separate skill, they only comment on some points when they are dealing with a new text, for instance. Others teach it as a skill in itself and make their students practise it separately. Some go even as far as to teach the phonetic symbols to students at the lower level. Pronunciation may be practised according to the teacher's or the tape's model.

Some teachers treat both composite and separate classes in the same way. One teacher writes that they always pronounce the new words before dealing with a new text in both class combinations. One teacher reports that she tells the student or the parents to get a student's cassette if there are problems in pronunciation.

There is little time to take notice of pronunciation in composite classes in connection of a new text. If the teacher feels that pronunciation should be taught explicitly, the lack of time may be even more obvious. Therefore pronunciation is taught more in separate classes and according to some teachers it is taught more thoroughly and on a more regular basis there.

In a composite class the teacher often cannot advise her students personally. This is where tape recorders come to rescue. The tape is a good source of hearing authentic language and learning as native-like pronunciation as possible. The only disadvantage with the tape is, however, that it cannot correct the possible pronunciation errors. The teacher would be needed in order to avoid the worst errors.

The time spent on pronunciation varies from 1 to 20 minutes during two lessons. One teacher who writes that only 1 - 5 minutes is used on it is afraid that it is too little. To achieve as good a pronunciation as possible it should be practised from the beginning. It seems that students in composite classes may have less opportunities for practising it.

6.1.9 Games, plays, songs and rhymes

As noted earlier, games, plays, songs and rhymes are important parts of language learning as they create favourable atmosphere and increase students' motivation (Dunn 1983:80). Without these refreshing activities learning may become boring, especially when the learner is a young child. Games, plays etc. could be used as more integrated parts of teaching as well but it seems that in most of the cases they are used to cheer up students if they are used at all.

Only two teachers think that there are no differences in using games, plays, songs and rhymes in composite and separate classes. And only one teacher writes that she uses these less in the latter as she works so much together with her students in many other ways. She writes that her students in composite classes play games when they are doing independent work.

Nevertheless, most of the teachers report that they use games, plays etc. less in composite classes because there is less time for that kind of activity. Those teachers who use them often do this so that both the groups are playing or singing together. Another way of using games and plays is that students play them independently while one group is working with the teacher. Some teachers feel that a separate room is needed for such activities. One teacher thinks that games, songs and rhymes are especially important for the starting group and uses them more in the composite class of grades 3 - 4.

5 minutes is the time that is reported to be spent on various refreshing activities. Separate classes seem to have more opportunities for that kind of extra, as some teachers think of this. Consequently, learning is probably more fun and students more motivated there than in composite classes.

6.1.10 Using extra material

There is little material that has been created for the needs of composite classes. They use the same books as separate classes. Consequently, the teacher may have to create some extra material herself or she may have obtained some ready-made material elsewhere. If the quickest students are to

be kept working all the time, separate classes may also use much extra materials.

The general trend seems to be that the teachers do not use extra material a lot in either of the combinations. In some cases the teachers feel there should be material available but they do not have any nor have they time to make it.

In separate classes only a few teachers use extra material; they feel that the book is sufficient in itself. Yet one teacher points out that using extra material would succeed better in separate classes as the teacher is available if someone needs help. In composite classes practices in using extra material differ a lot. Some teachers write that they use it frequently during the silent work (reading magazines for instance) while the other extreme reports that they use it only occasionally or not at all.

Only one of the teachers who use extra material has estimated the time spent on it and she reports that it is 10 minutes during two lessons. Using different kinds of extra material during independent work is probably something that would partly compensate for the lack of the teacher's time in composite classes. The material should be created in view of these classes in particular. Teachers do not have time to do everything themselves.

6.1.11 Using the computer

A computer is quite a new phenomenon in the language classroom. It offers lots of opportunities for learning languages independently. Therefore it may be useful especially in a multigrade classroom. Yet one should not forget that it does not replace oral communication.

Many of the teachers do not use the computer in their English lessons. Some of them write that there are not any computers available (nor is it possible to obtain one in the situation of having to save in everything) or that they cannot use one. Some report that the computer is used but only occasionally. There seems to be no big differences between composite and separate classes in using the computer.

One of those teachers who use the computer in the English classroom reports that she uses it in teaching vocabulary items. Another one reports that the computer is only used during the breaks. One teacher feels that computers suit well in multigrade teaching and another one writes that she uses it more in composite classes than in separate ones. It is one way of

getting students to use their time effectively when they are working independently.

None of the teachers reports the time spent on using computers in their lessons. It may be something that suits equally well in both combinations if the principle is that only part of the students is working with the computer during each lesson. A larger group must naturally have more computers in order to proceed smoothly. And of course there are quite big differences between schools in different parts of the country. Richer municipalities have better and more modern equipment to offer to their students than the poorer ones.

6.1.12 The units of the lesson in composite and separate classes

The explanation for many features that are different in composite and separate classes is the lack of (the teacher's) time. This can be seen in dealing with a new text, checking the homework, teaching structures, listening exercises, correction and practising pronunciation. It may also be seen in oral exercises and games, plays etc. if the teacher feels that these cannot be done without her help. There is less time for everything mentioned above in composite classes. Only written exercises and possibly some extra material or the computer may receive more time there because these are easy to work with independently.

As a consequence of the lack of the teacher's time, many issues that are dealt with the teacher in a separate class are worked on individually or in pairs or groups in a composite class. A separate class provides better opportunities for dealing with everything more thoroughly. For instance listening exercises and practising pronunciation may sometimes be skipped altogether in composite classes. So the students in separate classes may be expected to succeed better than those in composite ones within these areas of language learning.

6.2 Typical English lessons in composite and separate classes

In question 2 (section B) the teachers were asked to describe a typical English lesson in a composite and in a separate class. There is probably no such thing as a typical lesson in the English classrooms as one of the teachers commented on the matter. The practices vary from lesson to lesson

and even if there was a typical lesson, it varies from teacher to teacher. Teachers have formed their personal ways of working during the years. There are, however, some features that are common to many English lessons at the lower level. The features of the typical lessons in composite and separate classes are described separately although the lessons in the two combinations have a lot in common as well.

6.2.1 Separate classes

One example of a typical English lesson in a separate class described by one teacher consists of the following units:

Example

- listening to the old text and asking questions about it,
- doing listening exercises, singing songs etc.,
- listening to the new text,
- translating it into Finnish,
- dealing with possible new structures and practising them,
- reading the text after the tape and
- doing exercises from the practice book.

This was chosen as an example since it contains most of the typical features that were mentioned by many other teachers, too.

The stages of a lesson in a separate class that are common to many teachers include 1) checking the homework, 2) dealing with a new text or a new structure, 3) checking the exercises and 4) doing oral and/or listening exercises. The order of these stages may vary between individual teachers and between their lessons. Dealing with a new text may consist of the following stages: listening to the text, translating, reading, taking up new words, discussing, practising pronunciation and acting out the dialogue. Every lesson does not contain every one of these stages and they do not have to be in the same order every time. These stages or some of them may sometimes be teacher-controlled but quite a lot of pairwork is used as well.

Some teachers write that there are no big differences in the units of the lessons between composite and separate classes. Almost everything is just dealt with more profoundly in the latter groups. Some teachers feel that it is easier to improvise in a separate class than in a composite class.

Therefore the lessons in the former may vary a lot according to the group and the matter that is being taught.

More teachers use songs and rhymes, games and plays etc. in the instruction of a separate class as there is more time for that kind of activities than in composite classes. Another feature that makes the two combinations different is that while written exercises are almost always left as homework in separate classes, they are more often done at school by multigrade students.

6.2.2 Composite classes

In the following there are two examples of a typical English lesson in a composite class that are suggested by two individual teachers:

Example 1

- one group gets the assignments on the blackboard, begins to work independently and also checks everything by itself,
- the teacher works with the other group: listening to the old text, asking questions about it, doing a possible listening exercise, listening to the new text, translating it into Finnish, dealing with a possible new structure, reading after the tape (in the third grade first after the teacher), giving and marking the homework and after that
- the roles of the groups change so that the first group starts working with the teacher and students in the second group start working on their own for the rest of the lesson.

Example 2

- in the beginning of the lesson dealing with something together with the whole class e.g. a song or a game or even a structure or some vocabulary,
- the teacher asks about the old text and deals with the new chapter with one group while the other group is doing exercises or familiarizing itself with the new chapter,
- in the middle of the lesson there is often a song sung by the whole class together,
- the first group starts working independently and the second one with the teacher and
- the lesson usually ends with a game or a song so that the whole group can be together again.

These two were chosen as examples since they were thought to contain most of the typical features of the lessons and they are quite different from each other in some respects although there are some similarities to be noticed, too.

Some teachers (see example 1) try to teach composite classes as two separate classes as much as possible. They just divide a lesson into two halves and work with each group for half of the lesson or teach each group alternately every other lesson. This does not always work because there is only 22.5 minutes/lesson/group or just every other lesson of the teacher's time available.

Many teachers work with the whole group for a time (see example 2). The matters that may be dealt with in the whole group can be refreshing activities such as songs, rhymes, games or plays. Some teachers take new structures or vocabulary with the whole group. When these are taught to the younger students, the older ones have a chance to revise them and when the older students learn something new, the younger ones may learn something in advance. These shared sections of working are often placed in the beginning of the lesson but sometimes they may be left till the middle or the end of the lesson. The teacher in example 2 writes that she often has something in common for both grade levels in the beginning (a song, a game, a structure or vocabulary), often a song in the middle *and* often a song or a game at the end of the lesson.

A multigrade lesson usually consists of silent work and teacher-controlled work for each of the groups. While the teacher is testing the homework from one group or dealing with a new text or a new structure, the other group is working independently with exercises or familiarizing themselves with the new material.

The stages of dealing with a new text and also which ones of these stages are teacher-controlled seem to differ from teacher to teacher. For some teachers dealing with a new text means listening to the text, reading the text, translating, looking at new words, discussing the contents, practising pronunciation, acting out the text and all of these are dealt with together with the teacher. Others feel that many of these may be practised in pairs or small groups. Listening is most often done with the teacher, however. It is questionable if there is enough time to do everything together in a composite class as the other group is waiting for its turn.

One teacher especially points out that there must be variety in the lessons, which is of course true of separate classes as well. Another matter that is brought up in connection with composite classes is that the lessons have to be planned especially carefully in order to take both groups' needs into account.

6.2.3 A comparison between the two combinations

As PKO (1983:43) points out a foreign language lesson in a composite class does not differ from one in a separate class by its didactic principles but by its teaching arrangements. Because in the former combination there are two grade levels and in the latter there is only one grade level, it is inevitable that these two class situations must be different. A typical lesson in the two combinations follows a different pattern because the teacher has to divide her time between two groups in one of these situations and does not have to do that in the other.

As noted earlier some teachers feel, however, that there are no big differences in the lessons of the two combinations. This may result from trying to follow the same procedures with the same books and the same curricula in both of the combinations. As can be seen from the examples above basically the same stages are listed in both of the examples that were given. In composite classes the teacher works with the groups in turns and this means naturally that there is less time per group available than in a separate class. The biggest difference in many respects seems to be just that: the teacher's time available for different activities.

Two things that must be taken into consideration by multigrade teachers when they are planning their lessons, are the little use of various refreshing activities and the possible use of written work during the lessons. If the teacher wants to make learning more fun and thus increase her students' motivation, refreshing activities should receive more time in many composite classes. If the teacher wants to act according to the principles of communicative language teaching, written work could easily be left as homework and some oral practice in pairs could be done instead during the lessons.

6.3 Special issues in teaching English at school

There are plenty of things to be considered before the teacher starts teaching English to her students. Among the most important ones are certainly the patterns of working that are used, the practising of the four skills, the question of using the mother tongue, the importance of feedback and the oral period during the beginning stages.

6.3.1 The patterns of working in composite and separate classes

In question 3 (section B) the teachers were asked about the ways of working in the classroom when teaching English to composite and separate classes. This question has to do with the roles of the teacher and the learner: which of these two is considered to be the dominant figure in the classroom.

There is in general more teacher-centred working and less working independently in separate classes than in composite classes. It is possible to use the different ways of working in a more varied manner in the former. In a composite class silent work and teacher-centred work alternate with each other. Some teachers report that they work about half of the lesson with each group, some work alternately with the groups every other lesson. One teacher points out that in the composite class of 3 - 4 the proportion of teacher-centred vs. student-centred work is 60 %/40 % as the younger students need more of the teacher's time. Some teachers write that while one third of the lesson is teacher-controlled, one third individual work and one third pair or group work in composite classes, at least about half of the lesson is teacher-controlled in separate classes.

The proportion of teacher-centred working per group is naturally smaller in composite classes as the teacher has to divide her time between the groups. Some teachers write that the actual proportion of teacher-controlled work is not necessarily bigger in the singlegrade system, it is just that the teacher is available all the time. They feel that they should try to make their students work independently more than before. However, in some separate classes students are reported never to work alone and the teacher is still the dominating figure in the classroom.

Some teachers claim that there are no differences in the ways of working between the two combinations except for the fact that students in composite classes have to deal with problems on their own initiative

because they cannot always turn to the teacher for help when they are working independently.

One clear trend that can be seen in the patterns of working is that separate classes seem to have a greater number of teacher-centred lessons although there is a tendency to move towards more student-oriented ways of working also in many of these classes. Composite classes may be said to be more modern in this respect as they out of necessity must use a lot of independent ways of working.

6.3.2 The four skills

The four skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing are the skills that are supposed to be practised within foreign language instruction in schools. The teachers were asked about how they emphasize these four skills in their teaching and if they think that there are differences between composite and separate classes in the emphasis (question 4, section B).

There seems to be differences between the teachers in their opinions of which one/ones of the skills are the most important. Many of the teachers point out that reading and writing are the skills that are emphasized in composite classes. Some teachers report that there is as much listening and speaking as possible or that the emphasis is the same as in separate classes, i.e. that the oral/aural skills are the most important ones, but others feel that these skills suffer as there is not enough time. Some teachers feel that listening is emphasized in addition to reading and writing in a composite class.

In separate classes there is more time for listening and speaking than in composite classes. Many teachers report that there is more time especially for the latter. Writing is felt to be the least important of the four skills in separate classes. Written work is mostly left as homework; it is not done at school as is often the case with composite classes. A few teachers write that separate classes provide a better chance to practice *all* the four skills equally and from various points. One teacher writes that she emphasizes the productive skills, speaking and writing, in both class environments.

It can be concluded that multigrade teaching emphasizes reading and writing whereas separate classes have emphasis on the "noisy" side, listening and speaking. This is a natural consequence of the fact that in composite classes students often have to work independently and it seems

that these independent sections of working are still often spent on silent work, reading and writing. Listening without the teacher is not even possible without special equipment. Speaking can be and is done in pairs but some teachers still seem to feel that it is not good practice if they cannot control everything that is being done. Communicative language teaching calls for lots of oral practice, however, and this must be kept in mind in multigrade teaching, too.

6.3.3 The use of the mother tongue

In question 5 (section B) the teachers were asked about the use of students' native language in the English classroom and if they can think of any differences between composite and separate classes in using it.

The mother tongue seems to be used quite a lot in teaching English at the lower level. It is used for instance when the teacher is giving instructions, teaching structures and giving homework. The proportion of the native language is said to get smaller when students get older. One teacher points out that the differences in using English or the mother tongue (the extremes being only English - not English at all) depend on students' abilities.

A little over half of the teachers think that there are no differences between the two combinations. Almost half of them think that they use the mother tongue in composite classes even more than in separate classes because it saves time. They give instructions in Finnish in order to make sure that everyone understands them quickly. One teacher also writes that using English feels more natural in a separate class.

Although today's communicative classroom is supposed to use only English, it seems not always be the case at the lower level. The mother tongue is used quite a lot and this is even more true in composite classes. In this respect composite classes are more old-fashioned than separate ones.

6.3.4 The role of feedback

The role of both positive and negative feedback during the English lessons at the lower level was asked about in question 6 (section B). The teachers were also asked to consider whether there are differences in giving feedback between composite and separate classes.

All the teachers feel that feedback is important and it should be given as much as possible. Especially positive feedback is felt to be necessary as it is encouraging and it enhances motivation and the positive atmosphere in the classroom. Some of the teachers write, however, that there are too few opportunities for providing positive feedback.

Many of the teachers also think that errors should be noticed but that they should not be emphasized too much. One teacher writes for instance that students learn from their errors but "no big deal" should be made about them.

Over half of the teachers think that there are no differences in providing feedback between composite and separate classes. Some teachers feel that there are less opportunities to give feedback in a composite class. Especially in a large group there is too little time for personal feedback. Some teachers only give written feedback in connection with examinations. They emphasize that they always encourage their students to ask if there is anything unclear. Some teachers are afraid that problems may be unnoticed in a composite class and to avoid this it is important to check students' notebooks and exercise books from time to time. In a small group feedback can be more personal and more immediate than in a larger one.

Although there is less time for correction in composite classes than in separate classes, it seems that the differences in providing positive feedback are quite small. A general impression about this is that positive feedback is felt to be too scarce in both of the combinations.

6.3.5 The oral period

Students start learning languages in the third grade and this third grade usually begins with an oral period. It is usually included in the textbooks as well. In *OK English*, for instance, there is a so called tuning period, during which students learn words and expressions of different themes but they are not supposed to write anything yet. In question 7 (section B) the teachers

were asked about this oral period and whether there are differences in carrying it out in composite and separate classes.

Many of the teachers feel that it is difficult or even impossible to put the oral period into practice in composite classes because 1) they do not know what to do with the third grade when the teacher is working with the fourth, i.e. what kind of independent work they are able to do and 2) the fourth grade is often too easily forgotten and they stay behind when the teacher has to work so much with the third. The least one can do is to plan the lessons carefully.

In a separate class all the time in the beginning can be used for oral practice whereas in a composite class part of the time has to be used for writing as well. Because composite classes suffer from the lack of time and facilities, separate classes are said to progress more quickly and there is even time left for repetition. In a composite class the quickest students may become frustrated because they have so much empty time while they have to wait for their turn.

Pair and group work can be and is used in composite classes to improve the situation but students at this age cannot do everything independently. One teacher writes that the oral period is shorter in composite classes and therefore there is not time for every game and play. Two of the teachers report that they do not use the oral period at all. One of them writes that there is no oral period in the material that she uses (*Express*) and the other has chosen just not to use it.

All in all, there seems to be problems in carrying out the oral period in composite classes and to solve these problems the teachers have to be careful in thinking about what to do during the lessons. One way of coping with the situation could be using the students of the fourth grade as assistant teachers. Both groups would get more oral practice and the fourth grade would not be left alone all the time.

6.3.6 The methods

The purpose of the present study is not to go into detail about what methods are being used in the language classrooms nowadays but a few words about them may be in order anyway.

What still seems to be true in many language classrooms is that texts are translated into Finnish. This may be done at home and/or at school. If the

teacher uses translation, separate classes often seem to work with the teacher while in composite classes students sometimes translate with the teacher and sometimes they work alone or in pairs. The native language is still used quite a lot at the lower level and this happens even more often in multigrade teaching than in single grades. If one is to follow the principles of communicative language teaching, this should not be the case.

Some of the teachers teach structures explicitly. It seems, however, that grammar is not emphasized too much at the lower level. Listening and speaking usually get more attention in separate classes than in composite ones where there is often said to be too little time for oral practice. In the latter reading and writing tend to receive more time. This is also contrary to the principles of communicative language teaching.

In the use of independent work composite classes seem to be ahead of the separate ones. Working independently, i.e. alone or in pairs or groups, is nowadays used quite a lot in the former and also in the latter more than before. The roles of the teacher and students have changed in the direction of using more student-centred ways of working.

As noted above errors are considered to be natural within communicative language teaching. This seems to be the case in many language classrooms today. Errors are sometimes corrected but not emphasized too much. What is truly in the lines of communicative language teaching is that errors are corrected only if the message is not clear. In composite classes the teacher has not so many opportunities to listen to what the students are saying and therefore immediate feedback is not always possible.

It seems that the Grammar-Translation Method, as old as it may be, is still used partially in modern language classrooms. Translating the texts and using the mother tongue seem to be hard to root out. Although communicative language teaching is used to some extent, it seems that not all its features come true and it is probably not even possible in the classroom situation. In composite classes teachers must always remember to make sure that working independently does not mean working alone (without speaking) all the time.

6.4 The advantages and disadvantages in teaching English to composite classes

The teachers were asked to list the advantages that there are in teaching English to composite classes (question 1, section C). If they wanted, they could compare multigrade teaching with singlegrade teaching in this respect.

A few of the teachers seem to be quite pessimistic about multigrade teaching. They write that there are no or little advantages or that they cannot at least think of any. One of them writes a little ironically that the only advantage is that the employer saves money when the teacher is rushing around in composite classes.

Most of the teachers have a more optimistic view on multigrade teaching, however, and they find a longer or shorter list of features that are positive about it mostly from the student's point of view. There are four features that are mentioned in many of the answer sheets.

Firstly, students in composite classes get used to working independently and they are more autonomous and more responsible for their work than students in separate classes. The former are better able to use the dictionary and read the instructions by themselves. The teacher does not have to control everything. One teacher writes that these students are often more conscientious as the groups are small and during each lesson it is more often one's turn to answer.

Secondly, it is an advantage that the older students get a chance to revise what they have learnt the previous year when they are listening to what is being taught to the younger ones.

Thirdly, for the younger students "eavesdropping" to what the teacher is doing with the older ones provides an opportunity to learn something new in advance, for instance they may catch some new structures beforehand.

Finally, helping others (the younger ones or peers) is a positive phenomenon. Students cannot ask the teacher all the time and it is good to have someone to turn to. The older ones may act as models as well. Students learn social skills when they work with each other.

Some other advantages that are mentioned by individual teachers include the following:

- pair and group work and games are easier to organize than in too small a separate class,

- students learn to listen more carefully and
- students get more exercise in writing.

The teachers were also asked about the best aspect in multigrade teaching from the teacher's point of view (question 2, section C). The answers to this question are partially the same that are mentioned in the previous question (advantages of multigrade teaching in general).

A few teachers write that there is nothing good in multigrade teaching if one thinks about the teacher's work. Most of the teachers, however, find positive features to report on. The positive aspect mentioned most often is the small size of the groups. The teachers write that students are nice and behave well and the atmosphere is peaceful in small groups. It is also easy to motivate students and they are enthusiastic about learning in a situation like that. One teacher writes that this used to be the situation, i.e. relaxed and warm small groups, but it is not the case anymore.

Other positive features that are mentioned by one or two teachers are: time goes very quickly when one is in a hurry all the time, the teacher has to be persistent and systematic in order to plan everything carefully, the teacher does not have to advise her students all the time as they are more spontaneous. The teacher is only guiding her students and making their work possible. One teacher writes that the most positive aspect about her work is that it gives pleasure to notice that students are so responsible for their work.

Some of the teachers have the same answers to question 2 as to question 1: students' initiative, sense of responsibility and independence, repetition and learning in advance, peer tutoring etc. All of these are certainly positive from the student's point of view but it seems that they also make the teacher's work easier and more enjoyable or then the teachers did not think about the matter from their own point of view.

The advantages in teaching English to composite classes seem to be similar to the advantages of multigrade teaching in general: working independently, repetition and learning in advance by listening to the other group and peer tutoring are among the most important ones in both. If the teacher is able and willing to develop her ways of working, she can make the most out of these and other advantages. Working independently and peer tutoring, for instance, fit well into the concept of integrated learning, which has been popular at the lower level during the last few years. It is good that many teachers see these as advantages and it seems that they trust their students and that they have adopted the role of an instructor instead of the

traditional role of a teacher who tries to control everything that is done in the classroom. This would be impossible in a composite class.

In question 3 (section C) the teachers considered the disadvantages that multigrade teaching brings into the language classroom. If they wanted, they could compare the situation with separate classes.

Only one teacher writes that there are no problems in the situation provided that the groups are small enough. The biggest problem in teaching English to composite classes seems to be the lack of time. Most of the teachers report that they are always in a hurry when they work with composite classes and the teaching feels fragmentary and superficial. Some of them are worried about the school achievements of the students and feel that there should be more time for the common program. In a composite class there are so much to be taught during one lesson that it is not possible to concentrate on anything. It may be detrimental for students that there is too little time for review and no time for profound practice. There is also considered to be too little time for correction. The situation is especially hopeless if the level of achievement is below average. One problem that is mentioned is that in a composite class there is too little time for teaching reading and pronunciation and for oral practice.

Some teachers mention the "nerve-racking" nature of the work as a problem. There are interruptions in the work when someone from the other group needs advice. The teacher feels "schizophrenic" as she is torn into two directions at the same time.

The third problem that is mentioned by some of the teachers is that students sometimes have difficulties in concentrating in the multigrade situation where the teacher is talking to the other group. They talk about problems with noise. The "silent" group would really have to work silently so that the other group can concentrate and the "noisy" group would also have to work silently with the teacher so that the "silent" group is able to concentrate.

Some of the teachers report that it is difficult to differentiate inside the grade levels because there is too little time to guide everyone sufficiently. Differentiating in a composite class is also felt to be hard because there are students of at least two different ages and many abilities.

Other problems that are reported by one or two individual teachers are the following:

- too few opportunities for individual practice in the starting group (especially if the group is big),
- something difficult to learn may go unnoticed and it is hard to notice special problems,
- some students get too little attention and especially the weak ones cannot always cope with working alone,
- it is difficult to employ one group when the other group has something new to learn,
- the material is not suitable for the needs of composite classes and other facilities may also sometimes be insufficient and
- multigrade teaching is monotonous for students, "all work and no play", i.e. there is no or little time for games and plays.

The teachers were also asked about the most negative aspect in teaching English to composite classes from the teacher's point of view (question 4, section C). This question partly overlaps the previous question about the problems in multigrade teaching in general.

Only one teacher thinks that there is absolutely nothing negative in multigrade teaching and she writes that she enjoys her work. The rest of the teachers find some negative aspects in their work. Being in a constant hurry is felt to be most often the most negative aspect in the multigrade teacher's work. The consequences mentioned are the following: no time for individual teaching (even though the groups are not very large), matters cannot be dealt with as profoundly as in separate classes, there is only time for presenting or just scratching the matters, the weak suffer, only 22.5 minutes per class, it is not possible to concentrate on anything particular, the busy schedule makes one breathless, hurrying from one school to another as the distances are long, the total "mess" despite careful planning of the lessons, no time to get to know one's students.

A few of the teachers report that the most negative aspect in their work is the feeling of guilt because they are insufficient. Some teachers find it negative that they have to be so concentrated all the time in order to go through both of the programs without too much hurrying and according to plans. Managing students who are working on different matters and establishing flexible changes may be difficult. Constant improvising because of the space problems and other environmental questions is felt to be frustrating. A multigrade teacher also has lots of work to do at home since she has to plan the lessons carefully so that teaching will proceed smoothly.

Other negative features that are mentioned are: 1) problems with noise as two groups are working on different tasks, 2) students feel that English is difficult and therefore it is boring, 3) the teacher has not enough time to help, 4) there is little time for games and plays and 5) it is difficult to employ the other group when the others are learning something new. Part of these are problems from the student's point of view but as they are mentioned here once again, at least some teachers always seem to think what is best for their students. When the situation is difficult for students, it seems to affect the teacher as well.

The problems in teaching English to composite classes are basically the same as in multigrade teaching in general: the lack of time is the biggest problem, having to tear oneself into two directions, difficulties in concentrating etc. There are some problems, however, that are specific to a language learning/teaching situation. One serious problem is to take care of a sufficient amount of oral practice and in such a way that one group is not disturbed by the other. Another problem is that there is little time for extra activities and therefore studying English in composite classes may become monotonous and the students' motivation may decrease.

Discussion: A composite class vs. a separate class

In question 5 (section C) the teachers were asked to consider whether they think that it is more meaningful to teach English in composite or separate classes at the lower level.

The majority of the teachers think that singlegrade teaching is preferable to multigrade teaching. Only one teacher considers composite classes more meaningful claiming that teaching them is more varying and demanding. Another one reports that both are meaningful and cannot be put in any order of preference. A few write that it depends on the size of the group: especially if the groups are big, separate classes are preferable.

The reasons for choosing separate classes as the better alternative of the two are the following:

- there is more time to deal with everything more profoundly and to carry out the programs of each grade level; better opportunities to concentrate on one matter at a time - "with these curricula and books, my common sense tells me it is the only alternative",

- there are better chances to notice the problems and difficulties of individual learners and more time to advise weak students and to guide students personally, i.e. differentiating is easier,
- a relaxed, positive atmosphere without too much hurrying; teaching composite classes is too tiring for the teacher,
- there is time for refereshing activities and the happy sides of language teaching such as games, plays, songs etc.,
- there are better chances for creativity and
- there is enough time for oral practice and for practising all the sectors of the language.

Question 6 (section C) was connected with the previous one. This last question was about the teachers' opinion on whether languages should always be taught in separate classes and if this is the case, why this is necessary.

Only one teacher thinks that students need not always be taught in separate classes as there are no significant differences in learning results. A few teachers feel that deciding about combining the classes or not depends on the size of the groups, so that separate classes are not always necessary according to them. One teacher suggests that students should even be sorted by their levels of achievement. Most of the teachers feel, however, that separate classes are always in order. Some of them point out that this is especially important in the starting group (the third and the fourth grade). These students cannot work independently with oral exercises and lots of written assignments do not suit the third grade because writing itself may be hard for them and makes English feel boring. Pronunciation is also learnt from oral exercises and it is important to learn it well from the beginning.

The reasons presented for preferring separate classes are:

- there is so much to deal with within two lessons per week and there are chances to deal with every chapter more profoundly in separate classes,
- there is more time for everything and because of this the atmosphere is relaxed and positive,
- it is easier to notice the problems and difficulties of individual learners and take students' own programs and hopes into consideration,
- language learning can be made more fun by using lots of games, plays, songs etc. and

- the basis for language learning is established at the lower level and therefore it is important to speak the language as much as possible; in separate classes there are more opportunities for oral practice.

A few teachers think that although separate classes should always be used it is not always possible. This is probably quite a realistic view. Furthermore, one of them points out that what is even more important than having separate classes everywhere is to have a qualified subject teacher who is well-informed in her subject.

When looking at the answers to the last two questions it can be concluded that the teachers seem to think that separate classes are a better combination to teach than composite classes. The latter are often seen as quite negative. The biggest reason for this is probably the lack of time that the teachers experience in their work. Most of the teachers would rather choose separate classes if it was possible. Not very many of the teachers mentioned the workload of the multigrade teacher, however, although it is often said to be more heavy than in separate classes.

Answers to the last two questions might be different if there were specific materials and curricula for composite classes available. Teaching composite classes would certainly be more meaningful than it is in the present circumstances.

CONCLUSION

The purpose of the study is to describe the teaching of English in composite classes considering its advantages and disadvantages as well as to compare multigrade teaching with teaching in separate classes. The differences in different lesson units, typical English lessons and some special issues in foreign language learning were looked at and compared in the two combinations. As there were only open questions in the questionnaire, the answers differ to some extent. For instance, there was more information in some answer sheets than others, as some teachers had answered the questions more thoroughly than others. One question that proved to be poorly formulated concerned the use of time in various lesson units. It was probably too difficult to answer in detail.

The basic difference discovered in carrying out various units of an English lesson is the amount of time available, particularly the teacher's time. As the teacher has to divide her time between two groups in a composite class, there is only half of the time available for each group if the teacher works with two groups in turns and uses no shared sections of instruction. However, some teachers often do use these sections that may consist of games, plays, songs, rhymes etc. or of new structures or words. This provides an opportunity for repetition for the older students when the younger ones are learning something new and the younger students may learn something in advance when the older ones are being taught something new. Otherwise the lack of time in composite classes means that the matters taken up with the teacher are often dealt with more quickly and that students work more often on their own than in separate classes. Exercises are also often checked by students themselves in composite classes. Furthermore, English lessons are probably a little boring in many multigrade classrooms since there seems to be less variation in the lessons and less time for extra activities.

The fact that many teachers try to follow the same procedure in each of the grade levels in a composite class as in separate classes means in practice that there are often no big differences in the actual teaching techniques. However, individual teachers have their own ways of dealing with matters and these may sometimes differ a lot from each other.

There are definite advantages and disadvantages in teaching English to composite classes. Most of these are the same that have been reported by

earlier studies on the advantages and disadvantages of multigrade teaching in general (see e.g. Kalaoja 1990b) but there are also some features that are specific to the language teaching situation. As students often work independently, they usually learn to take initiative. Too much independent work without any control may also have negative effects: there is a danger of repeating errors and producing new ones without even realizing it. Another advantage is the opportunity for repetition and learning in advance that were mentioned above. A third one is peer tutoring: when a student helps another one, he may learn something himself. This may partially compensate for the lack of the teacher's time. And students also learn to cooperate with other people in this way.

The biggest problem in teaching English to composite classes has already been mentioned: the lack of time. Another problem is that multigrade teaching may be heavy for the teacher since there is so much planning to do beforehand and she has to be on her guard all the time during the lessons. It seems that especially if a composite class is too big or too small, there are lots of problems e.g. in a big class it is difficult to notice special problems and give students individual attention and in too small a class it is difficult to organize pair or group work, games etc.

The materials and the curricula that are used in composite classes have been basically the same as in separate ones. It is true that during the last couple of years the schools have had a chance to apply their own curricula but how much this has affected and will affect the instruction of English is an open question. It is the teachers themselves who have the responsibility for the curricula. The materials are still the same within multigrade and singlegrade teaching although the former certainly has some special needs of its own.

Although many researchers have found no particular differences in the achievement levels of multigrade and singlegrade students in English any more than in other subjects, there may be differences in the various skills within foreign language learning. As noted above, listening is probably the most neglected skill in composite classes because it must often be done with the teacher and there is too little time for it. If there is proper equipment available, students may listen to texts and exercises by themselves and in these cases the amount of listening is probably the same as in separate classes. Speaking is the other skill that is reported to receive too little attention by some teachers. If the teachers let students speak in

pairs or little groups, this should not be too big a problem except for the fact that the teacher has little time to advise these students when she is working with the other group. Reading and writing may easily be practised independently, so there should not be any problems with them. The only thing connected with reading that requires the teacher's attention is correcting the pronunciation of some words. It seems possible therefore that the students in composite classes acquire lower levels in listening, speaking and pronunciation. It would be worth finding out whether this is true.

It seems that teaching composite classes and communicative language teaching do not exclude one another although some of the teachers seem to disagree with this. What is important for the teacher to remember in both of them is that she has to redefine her role; she cannot and does not even have to control everything that students do. Her role is that of an advisor or a facilitator of learning. Lessons are not supposed to be so teacher-controlled as in the past; rather the emphasis is on the learner himself and on the functions of the language. With suitable materials and planning this should be no problem in composite classes either.

Communicative language teaching also uses individualization and group work, which are easily applicable to multigrade teaching. In a very big group individualization may be difficult, however. A multigrade teacher has to remember that working independently does not mean working alone, at least not all the time. Communicative language teaching emphasizes interaction between students and it is only possible when students are working in pairs or groups. Then they have a chance to express their own ideas and opinions. What must be made clear to them is that instead of the native language English should be used as much as possible.

Whether the information in the present study would help teachers to better understand their work or to make changes in it, is for them to decide. There is probably little that is new to them here. There might be some useful material for a new English teacher, who does not know a lot about composite classes and about how to teach them.

What should be kept in mind by everyone who is dealing with composite classes, is that one should try to make the best possible use of the advantages and at the same time one should try to minimize the negative effects of the disadvantages that can be found in multigrade teaching. The only way to do this is to plan the lessons carefully in order to guarantee that time is used efficiently. The lessons in composite classes are not shorter than

in separate ones. It is just that the teacher is not available all the time but this should not cause any problems in the communicative language classroom of today. The meaning is that students have chances for using the language.

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AN EXAMPLE OF A FOREIGN LANGUAGE LESSON IN A COMPOSITE CLASS (PKO 1983:83)

The lower grade

The upper grade

A COMMON WARMING-UP PERIOD

THE OLD TEXT

- the essential linguistic matters
- listening to the text
- a discussion of the contents
- checking exercises

THE OLD TEXT

independent work

- exercises connected with the old text
- structures, vocabulary or communication exercises orally or in writing e.g. in pairs

REPETITION

independent work

- revising something that has been learnt earlier orally or in writing e.g. with the help of games

- checking previous exercises
- the essential linguistic matters
- listening to the text
- a discussion of the contents

THE NEW TEXT

- listening to the text
- the contents, new words and expressions
- reading the text
- a new structure

independent work

- self-correction of exercises
- reading the exercises with pairs or in chorus

REPETITION

- working with the lower class

independent work

- exercises connected with the new text

THE NEW TEXT

- listening to the text
- the contents, new words and expressions
- reading

STUDYING IN ADVANCE

- working with the upper class

- a new structure

A COMMON ENDING OF THE LESSON, HOMEWORK

THE COVERING LETTER AND THE QUESTIONNAIRE

Hei!

Olen Pirjo Korolainen, kiertävä englanninopettaja Sonkajärveltä, ja teen kuluvana keväänä englannin syventäviä opintoja Jyväskylässä. Niihin liittyen teen sivulaudaturtutkielmaa englannin opetuksesta ala-asteella **yhdysluokissa** (osittain erillisluokkiin verraten).

Nimi- ja osoitetietosi sain OAJ:n jäsenrekisteristä. Sieltä ei kuitenkaan osattu kertoa, ketkä listalla olevista ovat kiertäviä englanninopettajia (eli siis sellaisia, joilla yleensä on kokemusta sekä yhdys- että erillisluokkien opettamisesta) eikä sellaista tietoa löytynyt mistään muualtakaan. Niinpä joudun nyt lähettämään nämä kyselyni vähän "summanmutikassa". Jos olet "oikea" henkilö vastaamaan, pyytäisin Sinua käyttämään hetken aikaasi tähän kyselyyn. Jos taas kunnassasi on muu kiertävä englanninopettaja, pyytäisin Sinulta sellaista palvelusta, että toimittaisit kyselyn vastauskuorineen hänelle vastattavaksi. Kaikki vastaukset käsitellään luottamuksellisina.

Jos kysymyksissä on jotakin epäselvää, minut tavoittaa parhaiten torstaisin ja perjantaisin allaolevasta numerosta. Kyselyn palauttamista varten on ohessa kirjekuori osoitteellani ja postimerkillä varustettuna. Olen vähän myöhässä tämän kyselyn lähettämisessä, mutta toivon, että ehdit vastata ennen pahinta koeruuha-aikaa tai mahdollisesti jossakin välissä sen aikana. Vastaukset ovat minulle ensiarvoisen tärkeitä, että saan tutkielmani tutkimuspuolenkin alulle (ja toivottavasti valmiiksikin joskus). Toivoisin saavani vastaukset 15.5. mennessä. Kiitokset jo etukäteen vaivannäöstäsi!

Terveisin

Pirjo Korolainen
puh. (977) 711 183

OPETTAJAKYSELY:

ENGLANNIN OPETUS ALA-ASTEELLA YHDYS-/ERILLISLUOKISSA

A) TAUSTATIEDOT: Rastita oikea vaihtoehto tai vastaa kysymykseen.

1. Olen _____ nainen _____ mies

2. Olen _____ 30 v. tai alle _____ 31 - 40 v. _____ 41 - 50 v.
 _____ 51 - 60 v. _____ yli 60 v.

3. Olen koulutukseltani

_____ aineenopettaja _____ luokanopettaja muu, mikä _____

4. Tutkintoni pääaine _____ englanti muu, mikä _____

5. Tutkintoni sivuaine _____ englanti muita, mitä _____

6. Olen ollut opettajana _____ vuotta

7. Englantia olen opettanut _____ vuotta, josta _____ vuotta ala-asteella ja _____ vuotta
 muualla, missä _____

8. Tällä hetkellä opetan englantia _____ yhdysluokalle ja _____ erillislukalle
 (monelleko) (monelleko)

9. Olen aikaisemmin opettanut englantia _____ yhdysluokalle/yhdysluokille
 _____ erillislukalle/erillislukille

10. Yhdysluokissa on englannin tunneilla yhdistettynä _____ 3. - 4. lk ja 5. - 6. lk
 muu yhdistelmä, mikä _____

11. Minkä kokoisia opettamasi ryhmät ovat?

Yhdysluokat: _____

Erillislukat: _____

12. Mikä oppikirja teillä on ollut käytössä kuluvana lukuvuonna?

Yhdysluokat: _____

Erillislukat: _____

Tässä kyselyssä yhdysluokilla tarkoitetaan yhdistelmiä 3. - 4. lk ja 5. - 6. lk. Jos opetat muunlaista yhdistelmää, mainitse asiasta. Mainitse myös, jos jotkut kirjoittamasi asiat koskevat mielestäsi vain luokkia 3. - 4. tai vain luokkia 5. - 6.

B) YHDYS-/ERILLISLUOKKIEN ENGLANNIN OPETUS ALA-ASTEELLA

Kirjoita, millaisia eroja seuraavien asioiden käytännön toteutuksessa on yhdys- ja erillisluokkien välillä sekä opettajan että oppilaan kannalta. Arvioi myös, kuinka paljon aikaa yhdys- ja erillisluokilla ko. asiaan tavallisesti käytetään kahden peräkkäisen oppitunnin puitteissa.

*** uuden tekstin käsittely**

*** läksyn kuulustelu**

*** rakenteiden opettaminen**

*** suulliset paritehtävät**

*** kuuntelutehtävät**

*** kirjalliset sanasto-
ja rakennetehtävät**

*** tehtävien tarkastaminen**

* ääntämisen harjoittelu

* pelit, leikit, laulut, lorut

* lisämateriaalin käyttö

* tietokoneen käyttö

2. Kuvaile tyypillinen englannin oppitunti a) yhdysluokassa ja b) erillislukoklassissa ala-asteella.

a) _____

b) _____

3. Arvioi, mikä on seuraavien työtapojen osuus tyypillisellä englannin a) yhdysluokkatunnilla ja b) erillislukoklassitunnilla ala-asteella: opettajajohtoinen opetus ja työskentely yksin/pareittain/ryhmissä?

a) _____

b) _____

4. Miten mielestäsi painottuvat kuuntelemisen, puhumisen, lukemisen ja kirjoittamisen taidot a) yhdysluokan ja b) erillislukokan englannin opetuksessa?

a) _____

b) _____

5. Mikä on mielestäsi äidinkielen asema ala-asteen englannin opetuksessa? Onko sen käytössä eroja yhdys- ja erillislukokien välillä? (Millaisia?)

6. Mikä on mielestäsi palautteen antamisen merkitys (sekä myönteinen palaute että virheisiin suhtautuminen) englannin opetuksessa ala-asteella? Onko eroja yhdys- ja erillislukokien välillä? (Millaisia?)

7. Millaisia eroja on 3. luokan suullisen kauden toteuttamisessa yhdys- ja erillislukokien välillä?

C) YHDYSLUOKKAOPETUKSEN EDUT JA ONGELMAT

1. Mitkä ovat mielestäsi englannin yhdysluokkaopetuksen etuja (voit verrata erillislukokkiin)?

2. Mikä on mielestäsi parasta englannin yhdysluokkaopetuksessa opettajan työn kannalta?
Miksi?

3. Mitä ongelmia englannin yhdysluokkaopetukseen mielestäsi liittyy (voit verrata erillislukkiin)?

4. Mikä on mielestäsi kielteisintä englannin yhdysluokkaopetuksessa opettajan työn kannalta?
Miksi?

5. Kumpi on mielestäsi mielekkäämpää opettajan työn kannalta, englannin opetus yhdysluokissa vai erillislukissa? Perustele.

6. Pitäisikö vieraita kieliä mielestäsi opettaa aina erillislukissa? Miksi?

Kiitos osallistumisesta ja hyvää kevätlukukauden loppua!