

**TEACHER AUTHORITY IN THE CLASSROOM. VIEWS OF  
FINNISH BASIC SCHOOL ENGLISH TEACHERS AND  
CLASSROOM TEACHERS**

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<b>Tiivistelmä</b> <p>Tutkimuksessa selvitettiin suomalaisten peruskoulun opettajien suhtautumista opettajan auktoriteettiin, sekä siihen vaikuttaviin tekijöihin. Opettajan auktoriteetin on perinteisesti nähty tarkoittavan opettajan valtaa oppilaisiin. Nykyinen näkemys korostaa enemmän opettajan ja oppilaan välistä vuorovaikutusta. Silti vielä nykypäivänä ei ole yksimielistä, mitä opettajan auktoriteetti käsitteenä tarkoittaa, ja miten se näkyy käytännössä.</p> <p>Keskeisenä osana tutkimusta olivat opettajan toiminnan, luokkahuoneen ilmapiirin sekä opettajan persoonan suhde opettajan auktoriteettiin ja sen muodostumiseen. Aiheesta ei ole juurikaan tutkimustietoa opettajien henkilökohtaisesta näkökulmasta.</p> <p>Tutkimusaineisto kerättiin puolistrukturoituja haastatteluja hyödyntäen. Aineisto koostui yhteensä kuudesta (6) haastattelusta, joiden kestot vaihtelivat kahdenkymmenen yhden (21) ja kuudenkymmenen kahden (62) minuutin välillä. Analyysivaiheessa käytettiin sisällönanalyysia tutkimusmetodinä. Tutkimukseen haastateltiin englanninopettajia, luokanopettajia, ja henkilöitä, jotka ovat sijaistaneet vailla varsinaista opettajankoulutusta. Yksi aspekti tutkimuksessa oli siis myös selvittää, missä määrin auktoriteetista on puhuttu koulutuksen aikana, ja miten koulutus on vaikuttanut auktoriteetin muodostumiseen.</p> <p>Tutkimuksesta ilmenee, ettei opettajan auktoriteetti ole käsitteenä selkeä, ja se tarkoittaa eri asioita eri opettajille. Myös näkemykset auktoriteetin alkuperästä vaihtelevat. Opettajan ja oppilaan välinen vuorovaikutus nähtiin keskeisempänä kuin opettajan valta. Opettajan luonne ja vuorovaikutuksen laatu osoittautuivat tärkeämmäksi auktoriteetin muodostumisen kannalta kuin opettajan toiminta luokkahuoneessa. Opettajan toiminta on tosin tärkeä siltä osin, että kokemuksen tuoma tietotaito luo positiivista ilmapiiriä luokkaan. Luokanopettajien ja kielten opettajien välillä ei havaittu selkeitä eroja heidän näkemyksissään opettajan auktoriteetista. Kouluttamattomat opettajat puolestaan näkevät auktoriteetin eri tavalla. Heidän toimintansa luokkahuoneessa on erilaista, ja he painottavat eri asioita.</p> <p>Koska tutkimus ei antanut selkeää kuvaa siitä, miten opettajan toiminta luokkahuoneessa vaikuttaa opettajan auktoriteettiin, vaadittaisiin jatkotutkimusta mahdollisista yleistettävistä toimintamalleista, jotka edistäisivät auktoriteetin muodostumista. Vaatisi myös lisäselvitystä, missä määrin opettajan auktoriteetista puhutaan opettajankoulutuksen aikana, koska vaikuttaa, että siihen keskitytään varsin vähän huolimatta siitä, että virallisesti paperilla sen kuuluisi olla osana koulutusta.</p>	
Asiasanat - teacher authority, teaching, pedagogical love, content analysis	
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## FIGURES

FIGURE 1	Dichotomy of two life forms .....	7
FIGURE 2	Pedagogical tact and the relationship between pedagogical love and teacher authority.....	9

## TABLES

TABLE 1	Three types of authority by Max Weber.....	15
TABLE 2	Information about the participants and the duration of the interviews.....	25

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

1	INTRODUCTION.....	1
2	BACKGROUND .....	4
	2.1 Definitions of authority .....	4
	2.2 Authority today .....	8
	2.3 Situational awareness and pedagogical tact .....	9
	2.4 The personal traits of the teacher and group dynamics .....	12
	2.5 Authoritarian and authoritative teachers .....	16
	2.6 Teacher profession and teacher training in Finland .....	17
	2.7 Authority and motivation.....	20
3	THE PRESENT STUDY.....	23
	3.1 Research aim and questions .....	23
	3.2 Data, participants, and ethical issues .....	24
	3.3 Method of analysis.....	26
4	FINDINGS .....	27
	4.1 Definition of authority.....	28
	4.2 Origins of authority .....	32
	4.3 The role of the learner group.....	34
	4.3.1 Negative attitudes in the classroom .....	34
	4.3.2 Situations with no authority .....	35
	4.3.3 "The group is the soil." .....	36
	4.3.4 Is the teacher or the learner more important when building teacher authority? .....	37
	4.3.5 Experiences of success .....	39
	4.3.6 Summary.....	41
	4.4 The personality of the teacher .....	41
	4.4.1 First meetings.....	41
	4.4.2 The appearance of the teacher .....	43
	4.4.3 The charisma of the teacher .....	45
	4.4.4 Teacher status justifying authority .....	46
	4.4.5 Friendliness vs. expert subject knowledge .....	47
	4.4.6 To be, or not to be yourself in the classroom? .....	49
	4.4.7 Summary.....	51
	4.5 Teachers' actions in the classroom.....	51
	4.5.1 Teacher or instructor? .....	52

4.5.2	The teachers' abilities to find different teaching methods based on situation.....	53
4.5.3	Use of humour in the classroom .....	54
4.5.4	Classroom atmosphere .....	55
4.5.5	Tension in the classroom .....	57
4.5.6	Summary.....	58
4.6	Teacher-learner relationship.....	58
4.6.1	Teacher attitudes and adaptation to learner needs .....	59
4.6.2	Potential of learners and their individual goals.....	61
4.6.3	Summary.....	62
4.7	Teacher training explaining different views on authority .....	63
4.7.1	Differences between classroom teachers and English teachers regarding their views on teacher authority .....	63
4.7.2	The participants with no teacher training.....	65
5	DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION .....	67
5.1	The present study.....	68
5.2	Earlier research.....	71
5.3	Limitations, implications, and a definition .....	73
6	REFERENCES .....	75

## APPENDIX

# 1 INTRODUCTION

Teacher authority is often misunderstood. It is frequently associated with a negative image of a teacher who holds authority through unfair punishments (Pace and Hemmings 2007: 5). Pace and Hemmings (2007: 5) even call teacher authority “a provocative term and a poorly understood phenomenon”. They claim that it is this insufficient understanding of it which also explains the little interest to study it qualitatively (Pace and Hemmings 2007: 5). The present study is doing just that. By utilizing semi-structured interviews, it aims to discover how authority is perceived by English teachers, classroom teachers, and substitute teachers with no formal teacher training in Finnish basic education.

Teacher authority is an important subject of research, as it has to do with supporting learning. How the teacher manages the class and how he/she responds to the students’ abilities affects classroom atmosphere greatly (Määttä and Uusiautti 2012). Classroom atmosphere, in turn, affects how secure the learners feel in the classroom (ibid.). Therefore, the teacher’s actions and possibly personality are central factors when supporting learning. The present study aims to discover, how and to what extent these crucial learning elements are connected to teacher authority.

Lately there have been several studies related to authority, but none of those focuses on the different conceptions of authority between different teachers. For instance, Määttä and Uusiautti (2012) and Ojala et al. (2019) have studied teacher authority but focusing on what it means to be a good teacher, and how teacher authority relates to that. Määttä and Uusiautti (2012) approached the theme by aiming to create a conclusion by comparing several previous studies in the field, and Ojala et al. (2019) conducted a questionnaire for 25 ninth grade students with both open and structured questions in order to construct a broad view about teacher authority. In my opinion, a deeper understanding is lacking without interviews, as for the study to really be comprehensive it would have been beneficial to also focus more deeply on the views of the participants. It is also possible that the participants were only thinking about a certain teacher when answering the questionnaire. Therefore, it is possible that their views about teacher authority may have to do with the personality of that specific teacher.

The present study is interested in finding out more detailed views of teacher authority by interviewing basic education English subject teachers, basic education classroom teachers, as well as people with teaching experience who do not have formal teacher training. The reason for this is to discover, whether there are differences explained by teacher training. Also, this way I think it is possible to get deeper in the analysis as several of the studies of authority have, as they have mostly been questionnaires (e.g. Ojala et al. 2019) or otherwise very abstract and conceptualized (Macbeth 1991: 282). This is also why it is significant to study teacher authority, as there is not much research from detailed and individualized teachers' perspective. Ojala et al.'s (2019) study also focused on the views of individual students instead of teachers, being interested in their definitions of authority.

However, Ojala et al.'s (2019) study is relevant to the present study in several ways. The present study, as well as their study, is interested in the factors that form teacher authority, how teacher authority can be developed, and how the participants define authority. In this sense the present study can be seen as a complementary research that aims to check the accuracy of their findings and to present more detailed nuances. In the discussion section I will compare the findings of the present study to the main findings and observations made in their study that are related to my research questions, which are listed below (in my own words to save space). These four findings will be utilized in determining the research gap, which in the case of the present study has to do with specific and detailed views of teacher authority, as expressed by teachers themselves.

- 1) The participants (students) saw authority as something fair and respectable rather than as a way of coercion.
- 2) The factors that shape teacher authority have to do with maintaining peace in classroom, expertise of the teachers, and learners' will to avoid punishments. It can be viewed that the participants want to learn, and it is an important factor when it comes to forming authority.
- 3) Students expected discipline and good classroom management skills from the teacher (personality traits of the teacher when justifying what kind of a teacher they want to obey).
- 4) Students obey a nice and kind teacher, and therefore the teacher should teach by using his/her real persona. The most essential thing in developing teacher's authority is to find one's own way of teaching and getting to know one's own personality. Authority development is seen as a process that continues throughout the teaching career.

The two first findings will prove significant to the present study as they have to do with classroom atmosphere and student participation in classroom actions. The two last findings, in turn, will prove significant, as they have to do with teacher's



personality (You can find the research questions in Section 3.1). I am interested in finding out whether my findings differ from Ojala et al.'s (2019) findings, as I can touch the subject more profoundly due to fact that the semi-structured interviews can reveal more in-depth information about the participants as a questionnaire could (Williamson and Johanson 2018: 381-382). Also, as I mentioned, Ojala et al.'s (2019) study is interested in the views of learners, while the present study has to do with the views of teachers.

The fourth finding also would answer the biggest question why I wanted to make the present study in the first place. I got good feedback from all my instructors during my teacher training, and it made me wonder how I managed so well even though I am not a typical authoritative figure, at least in my opinion. Maybe it is because I was always myself in the classroom and did the teaching my way, if Ojala, et al.'s (2019) findings hold true. With the help of the findings that arise from the interviews I aim to find the answer to that question as well.

In the second chapter I will present the theoretical background. I will start by discussing definitions of authority, after which I will introduce some of the factors that justify teacher authority and factors that teacher authority is based on. I will also examine how pedagogical tact and pedagogical love are connected to teacher authority. Finally, I will take a closer look at teacher training and profession in Finland. Following the theoretical background, the present study and methodology will be discussed in detail in the third chapter. The fourth chapter will take a look at the analysis of the data and discuss the findings, while the last fifth chapter will draw a conclusion of the study.

## 2 BACKGROUND

In this chapter the theoretical background for the present study will be discussed. First, several definitions of teacher authority will be examined, after which concepts such as situational awareness, pedagogical tact, and pedagogical love will be discussed in relation to teacher authority. Third, the relationship between teacher authority and personal traits of the teacher will be viewed, after which the difference between authoritarian and authoritative teachers is clarified. Then, teacher profession in Finnish context and teacher training in Finland will be analyzed, after which the role of intrinsic motivation in learning will be discussed.

### 2.1 Definitions of authority

In order to be able to understand teacher authority, it needs to be defined. The present study aims to find a definition based by the analysis of the interviews, but it will also utilize previous studies. According to Ojala et al. (2019), authority as a concept is very restricted. They stress that it is always affected by several social, political, and cultural issues, which makes it difficult to give one exact definition of authority. For instance, people have different worldviews, and the role of education is different in different parts of the world. Also, the teaching methods and schooling practices differ significantly. Therefore, the present study cannot give a conclusive definition for teacher authority, but the central features can be discussed.

However, there are several definitions given to authority during the years, some of which I will present now. For instance, Bochenski (1974, cited in Ojala et al. 2019; Harjunen 2002) states that authority means the interaction between the holder of authority and the subject of authority. The subject in this definition is the person who is subordinate of authority. The reason for this classification, I presume, is to highlight

that in a classroom environment only the teacher, or possibly multiple teachers, can have the authority and therefore the students are automatically the object of it.

This definition also includes the preconception that the subject is aware of the authority and understands and accepts the information (Harjunen 2002; Nuolioja 2017). Nuolioja (2017: 12) states in her MA thesis that according to Bochenski's (1974) theory only an individual person can be an authority, and not a law or a rule, for instance. However, a whole classroom can be a subject, in which the teacher is the authority for each individual student. It is therefore always a question of a relationship between individuals.

Bochenski's definition has also been criticized. Nuolioja (2017: 11-12) states that it does not include indirect and hidden influences, which arise, for example, at school when students work without the presence of a teacher but still according to agreed rules. Bochenski's view is therefore not a generally accepted model of the relationship between the teacher and the learners.

Authority has also been considered to represent power. Weber (1964, cited in Määttä and Uusiautti 2012) proposes that authority equals power, and that teachers as a general rule are considered legitimate users of power. (I will discuss Weber's view on authority to more detail under Section 2.4). Also, Wrong (1980, cited in Määttä and Uusiautti 2012) stresses power in relation to teacher authority. He states that sources of power are for example legitimacy, coercion, and teacher's personal traits.

Hersey and Blanchard, (1988, cited in Määttä and Uusiautti 2012) further illuminate Weber's (1964) and Wrong's (1980) definitions by proposing that authority represents power in a sense that *A has power over B to the extent that A can get B to do something that B would not otherwise do*. While it is more specific of a definition than Weber's one, it does not consider the importance of interaction, which Bochenski (1974) saw as the most important factor.

Vikainen (1984) makes a difference between teacher authority and authority that is based on coercion, as in Weber (1964) and Wrong's (1980) models. She states that teacher authority has to do with aiding and encouraging the learners to perform the tasks themselves, and to get experiences of success, which she sees important in learning. The key to building authority is therefore in the learners, who are expected to accept the teacher authority (Vikainen 1984: 11).

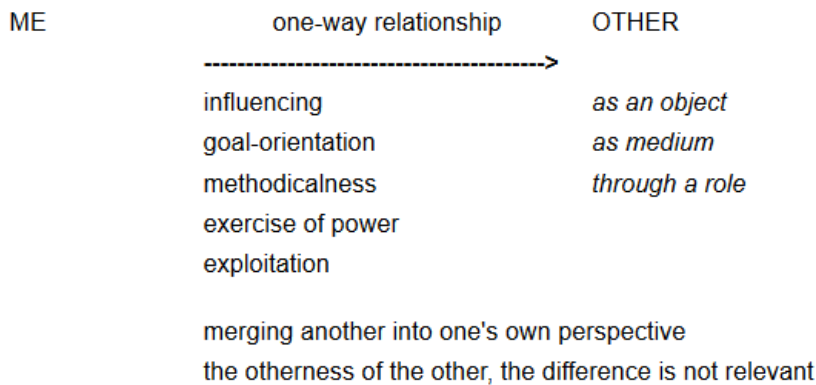
Bingham (2008) gives a definition, which takes both these aspects, power and interaction, into account. He emphasizes the role of interaction as the most crucial part of teacher authority. Even though he states that authority is not by itself related to power and coercion, he acknowledges the fact that there is a power difference between the teacher and the students in the classroom. However, the connection that the teacher has with the students is the crucial element in his opinion. He illuminates the view by introducing a situation in which a teacher tries to help a student to achieve

better results. In that case it would not have to do with teacher control, but instead with the changing relationship between them. He stresses that authority is dynamic in nature, a relation happening between people who have different roles in society (Bingham 2008: 1-9, 112).

Puolimatka's (1997) notion of *legitimate authority* stresses similar points as Bingham's definition. This view accents common understanding and aims to create an environment in which the learners could understand the meaningfulness of learning without coercion. In this model, interaction is being stressed instead of teacher power or coercion. Not only are the students expected to understand the meaningfulness of learning, also the teacher should realize that he/she oversees making the decisions that are the most beneficial for the learners. That is, the power relations are made clear in this model, but by highlighting positive classroom atmosphere and common understanding.

Burbules (1993, cited in Harjunen 2002: 153) expands this way of thinking even further. He speaks about authority and pedagogical relationship in the context of a dialogical relationship. He underlines the importance of communication not only in the context of teaching, but also when building an interactive relationship between teacher and learners, in which they both can learn from one another. The foundation for pedagogy and authority is therefore in mutual respect and cooperation, and not in teacher obedience, per se. Thus, according to him authority is not based on merely teacher expertise, but also on respect and trust between teacher and students. Figure 1 (Laine 2001) shows the difference between dialogical relationship and monological relationship.

### Monological relationship



### Dialogical relationship

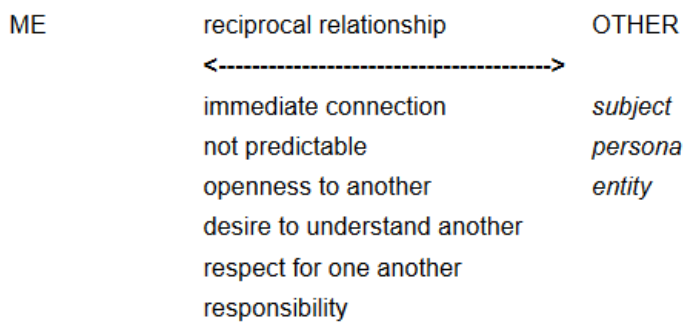


Figure 1. Dichotomy of two life forms. Translated to English. Original: Laine (2012)

All these definitions combined give a very complex image of authority. It can, however, be generalized that interaction and power are very relevant, even though power in a sense of teacher control is not seen as relevant today. There is always interaction happening between the teacher and the students, while there is also a difference in power relations, as the teacher has been hired to provide the students with new information. Despite that, it has been argued that the relationship is dialogical, meaning that both the teacher and the learners can learn from one another.

## 2.2 Authority today

Nowadays, authority is rarely considered to have to do with teacher control (Vuorikoski 2003). Instead, as we have moved into the 21st century, authority has been increasingly viewed as a pedagogical relationship between the teacher and the learners (e.g. Bingham 2007; Vikainen 1984). Equality and guiding learning are factors that are being stressed instead of traditional authority and teaching. The role of the teacher is becoming increasingly more to direct learners to self-direction (Vuorikoski 2003: 30). That way the teacher is more of an organizer than a traditional teacher.

It is also possible that the young people of today respect traditional authority less than the previous generations. Kyriacou (2009, cited in Ojala et al. 2019: 1) states that teacher authority has diminished in the last years. Even though my experiences in teaching are limited, I have noticed this as well. It seems that many students do not respect teacher authority in a sense that they do not obey the teacher or behave themselves in the classroom. But even though it seems to me that teachers are not respected as much as when I went to school, it is possible that it is because I see things differently now than when I was a child or a teenager. It also has a lot to do with the specific group and learners, as each group is different.

However, there are also counterarguments. Yariv (2009), for example, aimed to find out under which circumstances Israeli elementary and middle school children rebel. He discovered that 81% out of 200 of them approved teacher authority if it was used legitimately and fairly, meaning that it was agreed upon by the pupils as well.

It is also possible that there is no change regarding how authority is perceived and respected by learners, as nowadays authority is seen increasingly interactive instead of seeing it as a mean for coercion. This recent emphasis on interactive teacher-student relationships may have changed the students' perceptions of authority. The perceptions of teachers may have also changed. For instance, cultural change and the increasing stress on creative problem solving and critical thinking may have changed teachers' attitudes towards authority (Hennessy et al. 2007: 4). Also, the changing technology might have to do with it. Technology has become the 'fulcrum' for teaching practice, and this has changed teachers' role and authority (Hennessy et al. 2007: 4).

With the help of this and the previous section we can decipher that the definition of authority is in constant change. What authority was considered to mean only fifty years ago, or even less, has been questioned in modern studies. Therefore, it is also difficult to state what authority will mean in the future. Developing technology can change how authority is perceived and implemented. Also, there is always a possibility for global pandemics, as we have seen in the past year or so. This can change authority as well, as for instance the increasing need for online teaching and the resulting

lack of face-to-face contact has changed the relationships between the teacher and the learners, as well as between different learners.

### 2.3 Situational awareness and pedagogical tact

To understand the complex nature of the relationship between the teacher and the students even better, we need to also discuss the relationship between pedagogical love and teacher authority. In order to do this, I will utilize a four-field created by Määttä and Uusiautti (2012) (see Figure 2). I will also add the concept of situational awareness to their discussion, as I think it is necessary in order to comprehensively discuss them.

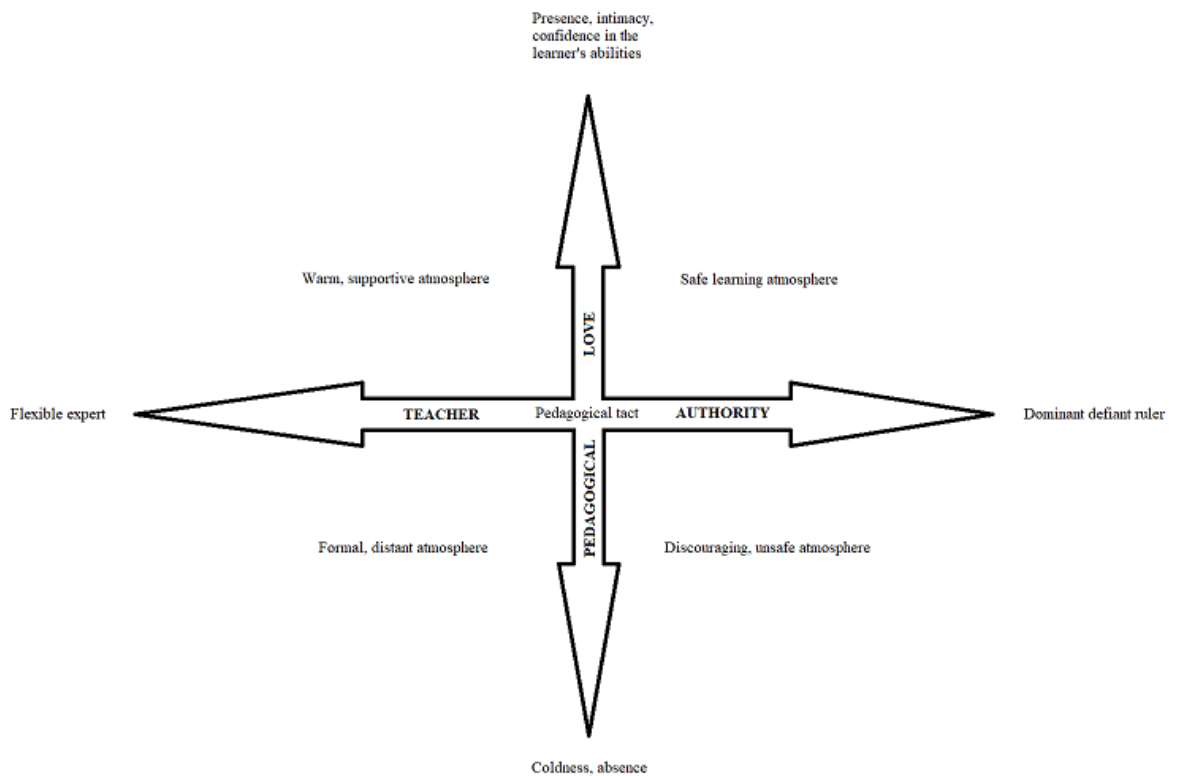


Figure 2. Pedagogical tact and the relationship between pedagogical love and teacher authority. Translated to English. Original: Määttä and Uusiautti (2012, 29)

Määttä and Uusiautti (2012: 24-25) stress that a good teacher always aims for the well-being of the learners. Pedagogical love means constant trust in learners' skills, and the teacher's aim to help the learners to realize their potential (Määttä and Uusiautti 2012:

25). The relevance of pedagogical love has been acknowledged to the extent that it has been argued that this loving and trusting relationship can even explain Finland's great educational success (Stehlik 2016).

It can be seen in Figure 2 that if the teacher shows strong pedagogical love and authority based on expert appreciation, the learning atmosphere is warm and encouraging. The teacher should be able to create a safe and comfortable learning environment, in which the learners feel loved and able. This can be very difficult as there is always the power difference, and the teacher should be the only authoritative person in the classroom. Määttä and Uusiautti (2012: 26-27) state that this asymmetric relationship between the teacher and the learners, which comes from the fact that the teacher has something that the learners do not yet have, is what poses the challenge for creating a positive learning environment. In Figure 2 we can see that a safe and warm learning environment leads to learners trusting in their skills, and that this comfortable atmosphere shows the teacher's pedagogical love. Based on the figure, it can be concluded that pedagogical love is at least as important for the classroom atmosphere as teacher authority.

At the other end of the spectrum there are learning environments in which there is lack of pedagogical love and the teacher authority is based on power and the status of the teacher. In these cases, the learning environment is insecure and discouraging. Määttä and Uusiautti (2012: 30) consider these kinds of classrooms unbeneficial for both the teacher and the learners, as there is less time for teaching and learning, and it also forces the teacher to be increasingly strict in order to control the classroom. This control reduces the teacher's impact on the learners, and he/she must work in a cold environment (Määttä and Uusiautti 2012: 30).

The concepts of pedagogical love and pedagogical tact are relevant when trying to understand the relationship between the teacher and the student. Especially pedagogical tact, which we can see at the point of intersection, (see Figure 2) will be important, as it highlights the teacher's ability and desire to understand the learner. Siljander (2002: 87) defines pedagogical tact as the ability to quickly and reliably find an appropriate course of action in every teaching situation. In case of pedagogical tact, the learning environment is not too official, but neither too friendly. It can be argued that the teacher must balance between formal and informal authority (I will discuss these further under Section 2.4).

This way pedagogical tact is closely connected to *situational awareness*, which refers to a person's "comprehension or understanding of both his or her dynamic environment and his or her need to make decisions that ultimately lead to correct actions" (Beck et al. 2015). This leads to the conception that it is necessary that the teacher can change his/her approach if needed and adapt their teaching to the needs of the group.



In other words, the teacher should have situational awareness to find the best way to cope in a classroom.

Situational awareness also shows in that the teacher should be able to find a balance also between pedagogical love and teacher authority (see Figure 2). They should be combined and used based on the individual learner and his/her needs (Määttä and Uusiautti 2012: 30). When working with different students, flexibility is necessary. It is possible that some students need more pedagogical love, while some may need more authority. Pedagogical tact manifests itself clearly in this, as the teacher needs to have the skills to be loving and to also show expertise.

To summarize the previous points, the teacher needs to have situational awareness and skills to create a positive learning environment, in which the students would feel comfortable. However, it has also been argued that it is not ideal to aim to create an environment without any tension, as learners need challenges in order to make progress (Vermunt and Verloop 1999, cited in Määttä and Uusiautti 2012: 27). Määttä and Uusiautti (2012: 27) refer to this type of positive but challenging atmosphere as *constructive tension*. It encourages learners to develop new skills to adapt to the learning environment. The teacher has an important role in this, as he/she actively requires the learners to acquire new learning skills for the learners to reach their optimal results. This view touches the idea of *legitimate authority* introduced by Puolimatka (1997), (which I discussed in Section 2.1) as they both stress the teacher's role in making beneficial decisions for the students. However, these views are also very different. Puolimatka (1997) stressed positive atmosphere and common understanding, and constructive tension has to do with an atmosphere which is more challenging for the students.

There is always tension in the classroom. Määttä and Uusiautti (2012: 27) propose that the tension in the classroom is either constructive or destructive, and often they both happen at the same time. This creates a great challenge for the teachers, as it is impossible to teach in a way which would be beneficial for every learner, as every learner is an individual and reacts differently to the challenges the teacher and the learning environment presents. It also proposes a question whether it is good and fair, even with pedagogical love and aiming for the best of the learners, to make the students to aim higher than they feel comfortable with. It can be argued that the teachers need situational awareness not only for the whole class, but for the benefits of individual learners as well.

Vikainen (1984: 9) emphasizes that in addition of classroom tension being both constructive and destructive, there are also situations in which there is no teacher authority. It is possible that no relationship of authority has developed between the teacher and the learner. The learner, therefore, is the determining factor in constructing authority in her view. Also, Ziehe (1992, cited in Harjunen 2002: 149) highlights

the role of the learner when building authority by stating that the learner's self-development should be respected. According to him, authority functions merely as an important assistance for the learners to find and individualize themselves.

Vikainen's (1984) view has, however, been challenged for instance by VanderStaay et al. (2009), who state that teachers should possess a certain level of professionalism in order to maintain authority. They call this *professional authority*. It describes expertise which derives from expert subject knowledge and pedagogical skills. (VanderStaay et al. 2009: 273). According to this view, the professional skills of the teacher can be considered the main factor when constructing authority. Nonetheless, VanderStaay et al. (2009: 273) also state that "authority more accurately derives from agreement than obedience, and the notion of professional trust". Taking these two views into account, it can be understood that the construction/development of authority has to do with both the teacher and the learners, even though the teacher has the professional responsibility and certain expectations of authority towards him/her. Professional authority is also closely connected to the conception of pedagogical tact, as they both stress the teacher's abilities to find the best methods of teaching in each situation.

To sum up this section, the four-field in Figure 2 is very useful when trying to understand how teacher authority relates to pedagogical love, pedagogical tact, and situational awareness. Still, it is important to realize that the four-field is merely an ideal model (Määttä and Uusiautti 2012: 30). It is helpful in conceptualizing how these concepts relate, but the reality is more complex. For instance, tension in the classroom, as well as student-specific differences and subject-specific differences can add to the complexity of teacher authority in an actual teaching situation. Also, the expectations of professional authority make the whole image even more complex.

## **2.4 The personal traits of the teacher and group dynamics**

Another factor that proves significant when it comes to teacher authority is the personality of the teacher and how the learners respond to it. It has often been conceived that a supportive and positive teacher will produce an atmosphere in which it is more comfortable to study (Cooper and Olsen 2014: 69-71). Nevertheless, it is relevant to also consider that, as I discussed earlier, it is often that a teacher will have both constructive and destructive tension in the classroom at the same time (Määttä and Uusiautti 2012: 27). It is also possible that there are learner groups with whom everything goes smoothly, while there are also groups with whom there are more challenges.

It is an important skill for the teacher to be able to find the golden mean between the teacher's personality and the ability to perform in a classroom environment in a way that would be the most beneficial for the students. That is, the teachers should be brave enough to be themselves, but also, they should know the professional skills needed to help learners reach their learning goals (Ojala et al. 2019: 4). It is possible that it is one of the most important things when it comes to maintaining authority with different learner groups.

It is also a question to which extent the teacher should show professionalism or friendliness. It is important to be friendly and maintain a positive learning atmosphere, but it is often considered that the teacher cannot be too friendly neither. This has to do with pedagogical tact that I discussed earlier (Siljander 2002; Määttä and Uusiautti 2012). The teacher needs to balance between pedagogical love and authority (Määttä and Uusiautti 2012).

A great way for the teacher to institute a good group dynamic and a positive atmosphere is to use humor (Ziv 1979). Fun and easy-going teachers are easy to approach, and the learners in their groups accept the shared values easier (Ziv 1979: 22). However, the use of humor will depend greatly on the personal traits of the teacher. For some teachers being humoristic is a second nature, while for others it can be more difficult or even off-putting (Azizinezhad and Hashemi 2011: 2094). Nevertheless, the importance of humor should not be downplayed, as it plays a significant role in establishing a positive classroom atmosphere, in which it is more comfortable to learn (Ziv 1979). Azizinezhad and Hashemi (2011: 2094) discussed humor in a language class and found out that humor can make these classes more compelling for the learners by reducing tension and humanizing teacher image. For the same reason, it can be argued that humor can also be used to make any subject matter more compelling, as the use of humor has to do with the teacher's personality instead of a specific subject matter.

The use of humor also depends on the situation, and therefore the teachers need situational awareness. It is not always appropriate to joke around or to be light-hearted. In addition, the use of humor can be dangerous in terms on maintaining the image of a professional and trusted teacher. The imaginations created by society help in it, however. Teachers are generally considered to be reliable and to obtain more knowledge than the learners. This takes us back to Figure 2, and Määttä and Uusiautti's (2012: 26-27) realization that it is this imbalance which creates the need to actively create a positive learning atmosphere in the first place.

Smith (1985, cited in Harjunen 2002: 302) also stresses the importance of the personal traits of the teacher. He argues that teacher authority cannot be built based on the subject being taught but based on their didactic skills and a deeper moral understanding. Therefore, the basis of teacher authority is that the teacher is, *inter alia*, a

good and understanding person with patience and listening skills (Smith 1985, cited in Harjunen 2002:302).

Another personal attribute of the teachers that may affect authority is their appearance. It is the most noticeable thing when a new teacher enters a classroom. The teaching methods and the personality of the teacher become familiar only after creating the first impression. Kamila (2012: 13) states that appearance is often understood as nonverbal communication. For instance, clothing and accessories give visual cues that people use when drawing conclusions about a teacher. On basis of these cues, people create an impression of the teacher, even though the teachers themselves would perceive their appearance as insignificant (Kamila 2012: 13).

Kamila (2012: 129-130) also adds that stereotypically teachers are being perceived as model citizens. This, in turn, can have an effect on how some teachers decide to dress. Even though it is not agreed on that prestige or authority is achieved by appearance, being a role model is connected to the concept of teacher authority, to which some teachers connect formal and masculine clothing (Kamila 2012: 130-138). Therefore, some teachers decide to dress conservatively (Kamila 2012: 129). A big factor can be the expectations that the supervisors, colleagues, and parents create. A teacher cannot escape these expectations even outside the school day (Kamila 2012: 130). Kamila (2012: 130) states the risks of this by pointing out that the pressures of maintaining these ideal models can lead to teachers becoming genderless model citizens. It is always necessary to be critical when it comes to these expectations. Teacher appearance is a very controversial phenomenon.

I also find it relevant to briefly discuss first meetings to more detail, and why they are relevant when it comes to building teacher authority and a functioning group. First meetings are very important when it comes to creating group dynamics. The first impressions often stay for a long time (Human et al. 2012: 395, Tetlock 1983: 285-286) and affect the dynamic either positively or negatively for example via assumed similarity (Human et al. 2012 :398-399). This phenomenon has also been called *belief perseverance*, and it refers to the inability to change initial thoughts despite new information that contradicts them (Tetlock 1983: 285). From my own teaching experience, I can say that if the teacher lets the learners disrupt or interfere the first classes, in all probability it is very difficult to change this in the future. Because of this, it is extremely important to establish and clarify the classroom rules for the learners since the beginning. It is a challenge, however, as the students need to accept these rules. If we stress the importance of Puolimatka's (1997) concept of legitimate authority, common understanding and lack of coercion are the keys to successful learning. The teacher needs to be careful that he/she does not accentuate the rules, but rather lets the learners realize them themselves (Puolimatka 1997). However, the importance of first meetings should not be downplayed, as they can be pivotal when building teacher authority.

The teacher's charisma is also in a significant role when constructing teacher authority. Weber (1968, cited in di Piramo 2010: 9, VanderStaay et al. 2009: 263) introduced the concept of charismatic authority, which he identified to be one of the three types of authority alongside legal-rational authority and traditional authority. While legal authority has to do with laws and rules, and traditional authority with time and tradition, charismatic authority is based on the respect towards the teachers due to their personal attributes (VanderStaay et al. 2009: 263, di Piramo 2010: 9). di Piramo (2010: 11) also specifies that in its purest form, charismatic authority depends merely on the acceptance of the followers (who are the learners in a school context). The key features of these three authority types can be found in Table 1 below.

Table 1. Three types of authority by Max Weber. (lumenlearning.com; VanderStaay, 2009; di Piramo, 2010)

	<b>Traditional</b>	<b>Charismatic</b>	<b>Legal-Rational</b>
<b>Source of power</b>	Legitimized by long-standing custom	Based on leader's personal qualities	Authority resides in the office, not the person
<b>Leadership Style</b>	Historic personality	Dynamic personality	Bureaucratic officials
<b>Example</b>	Patriarchy (traditional positions)	Napoleon, Jesus Christ, Mother Teresa	U.S. presidency and Congress, Modern British parliament

The concept of charismatic authority has also been criticized. di Piramo (2010: 13) indicates that there is a lot of debate concerning Weber's work, and even to whether it is useful as a concept at all. di Piramo (2010: 13) also points out that Weber was not a social psychologist, and that he did not attempt to find specific personality traits that would make someone a charismatic leader. Peters (1973, cited in Harjunen 2002: 146) also states that authority based on charisma has risks, as charismatic leaders can easily make the others to believe themselves. This can lead to a group in which the teacher cannot be wrong, which is against the modern way to see authority that stresses interaction between the teacher and the learners (e.g. Bingham 2007; Vikainen 1984). This is also why charismatic authority has been regarded as irrational and illegitimate (Wilson 1990, cited in Harjunen 2002: 146). However, I include charismatic authority in the theoretical background of the present study, as Weber's (1968) three-field gives a complementary or optional way to see authority.

To briefly sum up this section, every teacher sees authority from their perspective, and their own personal traits affect to how authority is constructed. The personal traits can also have an effect on whether the teacher is authoritative or authoritarian, which I will look more into detail in the next section.

## 2.5 Authoritarian and authoritative teachers

When studying the teacher-student relationship, emphasis is placed either on teaching and serious learning, or on the educational and parental side of the relationship, such as teaching values and norms (Harjunen 2002: 158). This section has to do with the parental side of the relationship, and therefore it is closely connected to teaching younger learners. However, there are always some parenting skills needed when teaching under-age learners, even in high school.

Baumrind (1966) states that there are three models of parental control: permissive, authoritarian, and authoritative. In this section I will discuss the last two of them, as they can be utilized in understanding authority even better.

Määttä and Uusiautti (2012: 31) state that if authority is constructed by forcing and not a mutual respect, it is based on authoritarian principles. Then authority is not based on pedagogical love and professionalism of the teacher, and the relationship between the teacher and the learner is dominative (Määttä and Uusiautti 2012: 31). Baumrind (1966: 890-891) further elaborates that an authoritarian teacher is demanding, and if the learner questions his/her actions there will be consequences. (Baumrind talks about parents and their children, but for the purpose of the present study the same applies for teachers and learners.) Authoritarian teachers therefore base their teaching on control and external motivation (Baumrind 1966: 890-891). This would be linked to Weber's (1964), Wrong's (1980), and Hersey and Blanchard's (1988) definitions of authority that I discussed earlier, as teacher control and coercion are central features of them. As discussed, these models are regarded as outdated nowadays. This could suggest that authoritarian teaching methods would be outdated as well. Baumrind's (1966: 890) realization that an authoritarian parent (or a teacher in case of the present study) compares the child's behavior to pre-set standards and has little willingness to negotiate changes in practices would also suggest that authoritarian teaching methods are outdated.

An authoritative teacher, on the other hand, is ready to discuss with the learner (Baumrind 1966: 891). There are rules and limits, but this kind of teacher takes the opinions of learners into account and justifies his/her actions (Baumrind 1966: 891). In conflicts, the authoritative teacher gives alternative patterns of behavior, and the actions do not automatically have consequences (Baumrind 1966: 891). Therefore, an authoritative teacher is more in line with the modern approach to authority, which underlines fair and ethical interaction between the teacher and the learners.

## 2.6 Teacher profession and teacher training in Finland

This section will look at teacher profession and status, after which teacher training in Finland will be discussed. This section continues the discussion about professional authority that I was looking at under Section 2.3 of the present study. This section also has to do with legal-rational authority that was discussed earlier (see Table 1).

Professional authority in a teaching context, as stated earlier, means that there is authority that comes from professionalism which derives from expert subject knowledge and pedagogical skills (VanderStaay et al. 2009: 273). Teacher status, therefore, brings authority by itself (Harjunen 2002: 298-301). For instance, the teacher can act in the name of rules and fairness, and his/her actions prevent students from doing something they are not allowed to do, such as smoking in the school area (Harjunen 2002: 299). As far as students are concerned, they must trust authority so that they, in turn, can fulfill their responsibilities, that is, to do schoolwork in an exemplary manner (Harjunen 2002: 299).

Harjunen (2002: 299) talks about impersonal authority (in Finnish *epäpersoonallinen auktoriteetti*). She states that this type of authority has to do with unequal status between teacher and learners when a teacher takes an impersonal course of action in order to represent the role of a teacher. This means that although teachers remain themselves, they are not acting like themselves (Harjunen 2002: 299). This way impersonal authority could mean the same thing as legal-rational authority that I discussed earlier, as in each of them the legitimacy of the leader's order is based on rationally set, agreed rules.

Now I will focus more specifically on rules in the Finnish context. Legal-rational authority shows in Finland so that the teacher must obey the Finnish legislation and follow the national regulations set in curriculum for basic education. One of the most significant laws for elementary school teachers is the Basic Education Act (see Finlex). Teacher authority shows in it, for instance, so that it stresses teachers' role in supporting students' growth into humanity and ethically responsible membership in society as well as giving them essential skills they will need in life (2 §) teachers' role in promoting education and equality (2 §), and the importance of communication and cooperation with homes (3 §). I.e., the expertise of teachers is recognized in the law as well. I will not focus on laws anymore as they are not at the center of the present study, even though they are helpful for understanding legal-rational authority.

As the present study is interested in finding out whether authority manifests itself differently for English teachers, classroom teachers, and those who have worked as a substitute teacher without formal training, it is necessary to take a look at whether there seem to be different foci in the curriculum for basic education between English teachers and classroom teachers. My assumption is that the curriculum can be

indicative whether there are differences in how teacher authority is stressed in each of these and whether the objectives differ. In the curriculum (POPS 2014: 20-24, 99-101, 155-158), transversal competences are being discussed under each set of grades (grades 1-2, 3-6, and 7-9). The role of the classroom teacher is very important when it comes to these, as he/she spends significantly more time with the children than the subject teacher. Even though each teacher pays attention to these issues, the responsibility of the classroom teacher as an educator in terms of general knowledge and transversal competences is even greater. By comparing the goals of English teachers and the goals under transversal competences it can be seen indicatively whether there are differences when it comes to teacher authority between classroom teachers and English teachers. Even if the goals in the curriculum would not have to do with teacher authority directly, looking at the curriculum can be helpful when aiming to understand the differences between the two professions.

The main goals are similar for each grade when it comes to transversal competences (POPS 2014: 20-24, 99-101, 155-158, 281-285). The main focuses have to do with knowing and taking care of oneself, interaction and working together, information and communication technology skills, learning to think, multiliteracy, and cultural competence. The main difference between different age groups is visible in regards of the cultural competence, as for grades 1-2 the importance of family and community are being highlighted, whereas for grades 7-9 a broader cultural diversity, such as human rights, religions, and human rights treaties are mentioned as goals (POPS 2014: 100, 282).

The English curriculum also stresses the development of thinking skills, formation and appreciation of one's identity, interaction skills, multiliteracy, and cultural competence (POPS 2014: 127-128, 218-227, 348-352). Cultural competence in English curriculum, however, has to do with linguistic and cultural diversity of the world around them and the (possibly multilingual) school community (POPS 2014: 127-128, 218-227, 348-352). They are very similar goals that are being stressed in transversal competences. Thus, it can be assumed that the classroom teacher and the English teacher are expected to emphasize largely similar issues. In that respect, there do not seem to be major differences in the job requirements.

If we are looking at the goals of teacher training itself, there are some clearer differences between English teacher training and classroom teacher training (I looked more specifically at the goals that have to do with teacher authority in teacher training in the University of Jyväskylä between these two programmes. The classroom teacher training program (see <https://www.jyu.fi/ops/fi/edupsy/opettajankoulutuksen-lahtokohta-ja-tavoitteet>) stresses that it trains active future experts in the field of education. It also stresses collaboration between teacher educators and students, consisting both of consensus and conflicts of views. This can be viewed that classroom



teacher trainees are at the same level with the professionals already during their studies. In the classroom teacher training program, it is also mentioned that it supports the students' professional development as autonomous and ethically responsible experts who critically analyze and reform their own educational and educational culture. The goal, therefore, is to create a strong academic identity. Therefore, it can be argued that building professional authority is recognized in classroom teacher training since the beginning.

The goals in bachelor's degree programme in English teacher field of study (see <https://www.jyu.fi/ops/fi/hytk/kielten-aineenopettajan-kandidaattiohjelman-englannin-kielen-opintosuunta>) differ to some extent from the goals for the classroom teacher trainees mentioned above (I am merely focusing on universal goals that can be utilized when trying to understand the differences between these two programmes. I am not focusing on language specific goals). They do not directly have to do with professional authority, but instead with goals such as critical reading skills, communication skills, cultural competence, theoretical knowledge, understanding lifelong learning in the development of expertise, and identifying their strengths and areas for development. It can be argued to what extent these goals have to do with building professional authority. Also, it must be remembered that the actual pedagogy does not really belong to the subject departments, but rather it is carried out at the departments of teacher education.

However, there were also goals that link more directly to teacher authority. In the programme it is stated that the trainees are expected to understand the role of a language expert in interprofessional cooperation and to learn how to develop their expertise. These points highlight their expert subject knowledge and therefore also their status as an authoritative, professional authority. However, the goals are not as overtly connected to teacher authority as the goals of classroom teacher training in my view.

It is, however, a question whether the subject teacher trainees are less concerned with authority, as it is possible that the differences above are explained by different ways to mark the goals. It is also difficult to tell how much these goals show in the concrete teaching and studying. The detailed course descriptions suggest that authority is indeed a matter of concern (again, I looked at the course goals in the University of Jyväskylä). I carefully read the course descriptions for each of the basic and intermediate courses of pedagogical studies for subject teachers and found several references to teacher authority. Under the course OPEA515 (see <https://sisu.jyu.fi/student/courseunit/otm-246e27c2-caf6-4272-a731-bda85119b1d9/brochure>) the goals include that the teacher trainee is aware of his/her responsibilities as an educator, and that he/she has the basic skills to guide learning. It is also said that the trainee would learn to identify the aims and contents of teaching based on the curriculum. The

specialisation studies and applied studies (OPEA525 and OPEA525) deepen these skills, even though there are no explicit goals stated when it comes to these. Under OPEA535 (see <https://sisu.jyu.fi/student/courseunit/otm-b8f65dc0-953c-4741-94b4-09cf372825fe/brochure>) it is said, however, that after completing the course the teacher trainees can see their actions from a theoretical point of view, and can apply their interaction skills in professional cooperation.

Interaction skills are also highlighted in the goals of KTKP050 (see <https://sisu.jyu.fi/student/courseunit/otm-bfbf1087-c013-467c-a833-508ebc5ed5ce/brochure>), and understanding the collaborative nature of teaching in the goals of OPEA415 (see <https://sisu.jyu.fi/student/courseunit/jy-CU-21671-v2/brochure>). As interaction between the teacher and the learners has often been regarded as the most important factor in teacher authority (e.g. Bingham 2007; Vikainen 1984), it seems that teacher authority is being discussed in these courses, even if indirectly. KTKP020 (see <https://sisu.jyu.fi/student/courseunit/otm-7c6d3fc8-3c17-41fc-866e-acdcf52bc0a7/brochure>) also has to do with teacher authority as it stresses the role of education as a force to change and maintain social structures and discusses the relationship between education and power structures. OPEA315 (see <https://sisu.jyu.fi/student/courseunit/otm-6b831dcb-393a-4dac-98b6-514ed5cb3c89/brochure>) further discusses these points by highlighting the skills to cope and function in changing and diverse communities. KTKP030 (see <https://sisu.jyu.fi/student/courseunit/otm-c37a5ee3-e0cf-47ac-9442-7645ad14e5f7/brochure>) in turn highlights the trainees' skills to recognize their roles as an active builder of expertise and professional identity and to consciously examine their perspectives on these. Therefore, it seems that teacher authority is in fact an important part of the training of a subject teacher as well.

## **2.7 Authority and motivation**

Learners need motivation in order to participate actively. As the present study is interested in finding out the importance of teacher authority also when it comes to supporting student participation, I find it relevant to briefly discuss the relationship between authority and motivation. Nonetheless, I will not go into much detail, as motivation studies are so broad and complex that it would need its own study entirely. Within the limits of the master's thesis, I cannot include it to a great depth. Also, in the focal point of the present study are teachers, not students per se. Ryan and Deci (2000: 54-67) argue that it can even be that one should not focus on motivation at all. They claim that motivation can often be seen merely as a theoretical concept, which excludes the individual goals of the learners.

As I discussed earlier, authoritarian teachers base their authority on complete teacher control (Baumrind 1966: 890-891). This view on authority that is based on coercion is not beneficial in my opinion, as it underlines extrinsic motivation too much. It is not a modern viewpoint on authority neither. Instead of controlling the learners, in a modern classroom learners are encouraged and instructed to work in their own way (Vuorikoski 2003, 30). The students are expected to have their own experiences and interests in the forefront of learning. Nonetheless, I will not exclude the possibility of the relationship between authority and coercion. I think, however, that concentrating on intrinsic motivation would be more useful, as it stresses individual goals of the learners. Each learner has their own individual goals that do not necessarily match with the goals of the other learners in the group.

A teacher should therefore with his/her actions make sure that the learners have intrinsic motivation. Ushioda (2011: 11-13) points out that it is necessary for the teachers to focus on the uniqueness of the learners so that motivation would not be connected to control for the teachers. This way it could be seen that teacher's authority also has to do with building and supporting the motivation of the individual learners. Intrinsic motivation and teacher authority also are connected so that with their actions teachers can motivate the students to maintain their authority.

Intrinsic motivation is closely connected to joy. Armstrong (1998: 14-15) compares learning without joy to "soda pop without the fizz", which I think portrays excellently the importance of joy in learning. Teacher can, by teaching enthusiastically and being interested in the subject matter also spread the joy to the learners. I think it is also essential in terms of positive relationship between the teacher and the learner and a safe classroom environment. I believe it is this kind of environment that Puolimatka (1997) describes when discussing legitimate authority (see Section 2.1). It is hard to imagine a classroom in which the learners would understand the meaningfulness of learning without coercion if the learners were not motivated to learn. Also, if the learners have intrinsic motivation, they are more likely to respect teacher authority. As I discussed under Section 2.3 by utilizing Figure 2, the teachers should aim to create a learning environment in which pedagogical love is always present, and expert appreciation manifests itself so that the learning environment is safe and comfortable even though the relationship between the teacher and the learner is always asymmetric. This way we can see intrinsic motivation as a glue which binds a lot of the theoretical background of the present study together.

It has, however, been questioned how teacher authority and intrinsic motivation are connected. Iyengar and Lepper (1999) studied Anglo American children and found out that they show less intrinsic motivation when decisions were made for them. On the other hand, they discovered that Asian American children were most intrinsically motivated when decisions were made for them. This would suggest that culture

affects greatly how teachers should act in order to motivate the learners, i.e., authority is a strongly cultural phenomenon. The relationship between authority and motivation is therefore very complex, and it is also why I discuss motivation only in this short section. As I said before, it would need a study of its own.

### **3 THE PRESENT STUDY**

In this chapter, the research aim and questions are presented, followed by data, participants, ethical issues, and finally the method of analysis is discussed.

#### **3.1 Research aim and questions**

The present study aims to determine how relevant teachers find the importance of authority when it comes to maintaining positive classroom atmosphere and peacefulness in classroom, and also supporting student participation. I am also interested in how the participants think the teacher's personality affects authority. Relevant to the present study is also to discover whether there are differences in classroom teacher training and subject teacher training when it comes to teacher authority. In addition, by also interviewing people who have experience in teaching with no formal training, the present study aims to answer whether teacher training has shaped the views on authority. Of course, because of the small number of participants I cannot generalize the results, but I want to see if the perceptions are different for teachers from different backgrounds.

A great motivation for the present study was my teacher training. I do not regard myself as a strict authoritative character in traditional sense. I am not a strong figure in the classroom, but rather I am quite calm and quiet. Still, I managed well and got mostly very good feedback from my teacher instructors. That made me think that does authority necessarily mean strictness, as it is often seen. Maybe authority also includes the skill to adapt to different situations and learner groups, or to put it other way, it could be beneficial to find the right balance between strictness and easy-goingness. I wanted to find out where my authority comes from, and why I could maintain classroom control.

Following are the research questions that the present study aims to answer.

- Where does teacher authority originate from?
- How do the participants think the teacher's personal traits and pedagogical love are connected to teacher authority?
- How do the teachers' actions in the classroom affect their authority, classroom atmosphere and learner participation?
- How do the participants think their relationship with the learners is like?

I am also interested in finding out what teacher authority means to the participants, which, again, in the present study are basic education English teachers, basic education classroom teachers, and people who have worked as a substitute teacher in a basic school but do not have formal teacher training. It is possible that the meaning of authority is very similar to each of these groups, or there can be differences for example due to the different levels and focuses of teacher training.

The present study therefore aims to determine whether the perception of teacher authority is different for those who have attended formal teacher training, and whether the views on authority differ from the perspectives of a classroom teacher and an English teacher. I am curious whether the views on authority differ between these groups, and how has teacher training shaped the views, or has it shaped them at all. It is possible that there are differences in how English teachers express authority when compared to classroom teachers, or how the atmosphere is like in different classes. It can also be that the different perceptions of different subjects that learners have might change the classroom atmosphere and dynamic.

### **3.2 Data, participants, and ethical issues**

To find the answers to the research questions, I took a qualitative approach. I conducted six semi-structured interviews in total, two interviews per each of the three groups. Semi-structured interview has features of both structured and unstructured interviews in a sense that it has a pre-planned framework, but it allows probing questions beyond them (Bernstein and Lysniak 2018). As I mentioned in the previous section, my intention was to find as profound and detailed answers as possible within the limits of the master's thesis. Therefore, I conducted semi-structured interviews, as they could provide me with deeper and more nuanced answers as strict structured interviews.

In addition, semi-structured interviews allowed me to ask clarifying questions that could eliminate the possible ambiguous replies that would otherwise have been unintelligible. Another reason for choosing semi-structured interviews was to make the interviewing situation more comfortable for the participants, as it would be more conversational by nature. I was careful that any additional questions would not lead the interview to a predetermined direction, but to merely allow the participants to clarify their views and experiences.

As I already mentioned in Section 3.1, I interviewed English teachers, classroom teachers, and people who have worked as a substitute teacher but do not have formal teacher training. Two (2) people were interviewed from each of these three categories/groups, which means that there were six (6) interviews in total.

The interviews were conducted during February and March 2021. The interviews took place either in Zoom, Google Meet, or on phone, based on the wishes of the interviewees. Phone calls were utilized in two of the interviews because of technological problems that did not allow the use of video conferencing platforms such as Zoom or Google Meet. The interviews lasted between 21 and 62 minutes (see Table 2).

Next, I will briefly discuss ethical issues that arise from the study. I provided the participants with a written consent before they attended the interview, in which they established that they accept their information to be used in the study and confirmed that they understand they can revoke their consent anytime. To maintain the participants' anonymity and to protect their identity, they were given pseudonyms. The reason for this was also to make the present study more comfortable to read, as this way the participants are not merely seen as abstract codes but real persons with names. The pseudonyms, as well as the relevant background information of the participants can be seen in Table 2.

Table 2. Information about the participants and the duration of the interviews

<b>Pseudonym</b>	<b>Teacher training</b>	<b>Teaching experience</b>	<b>Duration of the interview</b>
Ville	no teacher training	almost a year	37 minutes
Olli	no teacher training	almost a year	31 minutes
Aino	subject teacher (English)	15 years	62 minutes
Marjatta	subject teacher (English)	about 30 years	26 minutes
Ilona	classroom teacher	over 30 years	26 minutes
Elisabeth	classroom teacher	29 years	21 minutes

### 3.3 Method of analysis

The research method used for the present study was content analysis. It refers to categorizing data into themes and aiming to find the presence of these themes that occur continually (Julien 2012: 121-122). Consequently, the results are very interpretative and open for debate. Content analysis made it possible for me to deduct parts of the data and focus on the integral and quintessential points that were brought up in the research questions.

According to Potter and Levine-Donnerstein (1999: 262) there are three possibilities for theory when conducting content analysis, which are deductive, indicative, and the possibility that theory plays no role. In the present study, theory had a deductive role, meaning that theory was used in mapping out the coding system (Potter and Levine-Donnerstein 1999: 264). In other words, theory was the driving force behind the present study. The answers of the interviewees are being mirrored to the theoretical background in the findings chapter (Chapter 4) of the present study.

The interview questions were in five categories, which were the four themes brought up in the research questions, and the differences in how much teacher authority has been discussed in teacher training (see Appendix). I transcribed the interviews word to word, so that I would not lose any relevant material. After that, I analyzed it across themes and codes, which in the case of the present study were these five categories of the interview questions. With each of these themes, I paid a close attention to the differences in the perceptions between the three study groups. I highlighted answers related to each of the categories with a unique color, so that I could faster and easier find the naturally occurred views that would match the correct category. Often the answer would rather match a different category than it was anticipated originally.

As a sidenote it has to be noted that, as I mentioned in the background section of the present study, pedagogical love is closely connected not just to teacher authority, but also to the concepts of pedagogical tact and situational awareness. Therefore, even though the question category has the term *pedagogical love* in it, it also includes aspects of each of these concepts as well. The reason for selecting pedagogical love as the heading is also because according to Määttä and Uusiautti (2012), teacher authority is in close and constantly changing relationship with pedagogical love (see Figure 2), and thus it can be viewed as one of the most significant concepts when it comes to understanding teacher authority.

The findings from the interviews, and their connection to the theoretical framework can be found in the following chapter (Chapter 4) of the present study.



## 4 FINDINGS

This chapter presents the findings of the study based on the analysis of the interviews. It is categorized based on four themes, each providing answers to the four research questions respectively. First, Section 4.1 discusses the definition of teacher authority based on the views of the participants and the theoretical background. Second, Section 4.2 examines the origins of teacher authority. Third, Section 4.3 looks at how the participants think the teacher's personal traits and pedagogical love are connected to teacher authority. Fourth, Section 4.4 focuses on teacher's actions in the classroom and how they are connected to teacher authority, classroom atmosphere and learner participation. Fifth, Section 4.5 discusses teacher-learner relationship. Finally, Section 4.6 takes a closer look at the differences in teacher training when it comes to how much teacher authority has been discussed. Whether the different trainings that the participants showed a pattern in their answers regarding Sections 4.1-4.5, it is also discussed under each of these sections.

In case of examples, the direct quotes from the interviews, I did not include stuttering or filler words. Filler words are words or sounds that are added which do not carry meaning themselves (Duvall et al. 2014), such as *like* (*niinku* in Finnish), or *like that* (*semmoinen, sellainen* in Finnish). According to Duvall et al. (2014), repetition is also a filler. Another way to define filler words is that they are words that are spoken but not commonly written (Learning Insight 2016).

The interviews were transcribed so that the key content was brought up and then the filler words and hesitations such as repetition were excluded. The reason for excluding all the words that do not carry any meaning is that the content of the interviews was the important, and also it made the extracts more comfortable and easier to read. For the same reason, I also wrote down each word according to Finnish grammar (instead of *mut, mä, aatella, tarvii* etc. I wrote down *mutta, minä, ajatella, tarvita*). The examples were then also translated to English by me.

## 4.1 Definition of authority

In order to analyze the interviewees' answers in respect to the first research question about the origins of teacher authority, it is necessary to first find out what teacher authority means for each of the participants. I started the interviews by asking how the participants would define teacher authority in their own words, based on their teaching experience and own personal views.

Interestingly, teacher authority proved to mean very different things for each of the participants. Their definitions can be categorized in three themes, which are 1) a view that teacher authority has to do with the personality of the teacher, such as his/her friendliness or trustworthiness, 2) teacher authority stems from teacher-learner relationship and mutual appreciation and respect, and 3) teacher authority is based on the responsibilities that stem from the professionalism and expert subject knowledge of the teacher. I will discuss this further in the following paragraphs by first providing the individual views, and then drawing a conclusion based on these views.

The following three examples visualize the three categories of teacher authority that arose from the interviews. Whereas example 1 shows the importance of teacher-learner relationship, example 2 shows the significance of the personality of the teacher, and finally example 3 highlights the professionalism of the teacher.

### Example 1.

Ilona: Opettajan auktoriteetti on tiedostettua johtajuutta, jonka avulla hyvä ja oikea saadaan näkyväksi yksittäisessä oppilaassa ja ryhmässä.

*Ilona: Teacher authority is conscious leadership that makes good and right visible in an individual student and group.*

### Example 2.

Ville: Minun mielestäni opettajan on oltava luotettava ja uskottava. Ja tavallaan epävarmuus tai itsevarmuus paistaa siitä auktoriteetista.

*Ville: I think a teacher needs to be trustworthy and credible. And in a way, uncertainty or self-confidence shines from authority.*

### Example 3.

Marjatta: Se on sitä, että aikuinen suostuu ottamaan vastuunkannon oppimisesta ja siitä, miten joku oppilas toimii ryhmän jäsenenä. Oppilaan pitää voida luottaa siihen, että se aikuinen kantaa aikuisuutensa ja sen vastuun ja sinnikkyuden, eikä luovuta oppilaan suhteen.

*Marjatta: It is that the adult agrees to take responsibility for learning and how a student acts as a member of the group. The student must be able to trust that the adult will bear his or her adulthood and its responsibility and perseverance, and will not give up on the student.*

As examples 1, 2, and 3 show, it seems that teacher authority is often connected to the teacher's adulthood, and his/her conscious leadership and pedagogical knowledge and the resulting self-confidence. The teacher is the only adult in the classroom, and it brings responsibilities already in itself. However, there are different approaches and opinions on how the relationship with the learners should be like. Whereas Marjatta highlights that the teacher should be responsible for how the learners act within a group (see example 3), Olli and Elisabeth (examples 4 and 5) stress the importance of somewhat a close relationship with the learners. I will discuss teacher-learner relationship and the use of humor to more depth later in Sections 4.6 and 4.5.3.

#### Example 4.

Olli: Minä en itse usko liian voimakkaaseen vahvaan auktoriteettiin sen takia, koska se on opetustapahtuma ja luokkatila on sellaista miellyttävää ilmapiiriä. Enemmän minun oma lähestymistapani on ollut se, että on tärkeämpää olla jokseenkin kaverillinen ja ystävällinen opettaville, koska silloin he käyttäytyvät myös hyvin sinulle.

*Olli: I personally do not believe in too strong authority because it is a teaching event, and the classroom should have a pleasant atmosphere. My own approach has been more that it is more important to be somewhat friendly to the learners and friendly with the learners because then they also behave well for you.*

#### Example 5.

Elisabeth: Se (opettajan auktoriteetti) on huumori minulla. Yläaste-ikäisille on ihan turha ainakin mennä opettamaan, ellei ole huumorintajua. Mutta pienille tietysti on erikseen.

*Elisabeth: It (teacher authority) is humor for me. It is useless to go teaching secondary school unless you have a sense of humor. But for the little ones, of course, it is a different thing.*

In example 5 Elisabeth points out how much teacher authority depends on the age of the learners. It can be argued that the teacher needs to have the skills to consciously adapt to different kinds of teaching events. Also, Ville emphasizes how much the age of the learner has to do with authority and its significance.

#### Example 6.

Ville: Se vähän muuttuu sen auktoriteetin merkitys. Nuorempia opettaessa tavallaan on jo jonkin näköinen auktoriteetti siinä itsessään. Sitten korkeakouluissa ja yliopistoissa, kun on samanikäisiä ja -henkisiä ihmisiä ja silti on opettajia ja oppilaita, niin silloin se on ihan erilainen se tilanne.

*Ville: The meaning of authority slightly changes. When teaching younger learners, in a way there is already some kind of authority in itself. Then in colleges and universities, when there are like-minded people of the same age and yet there are teachers and students, so then it is a whole different situation.*

Interestingly, it also seems that for many of the participants there might be some juxtaposition between a strong, powerful authority and a friendlier, softer authority. This in a way shows the two opposing perceptions about teacher authority that I was

discussing in the background section of the present study, i.e., definitions that either stress power and coercion or interaction between the teacher and the learners. Olli states that different teachers adapt different types of authority, for instance depending on their age and how respected they are. Still, he points out that there are risks for too powerful authority, as stronger type of authority might be experienced scary or intimidating by the learners. The personality of the teacher can therefore be a very important factor regarding teacher authority.

Example 7.

Olli: En usko liian voimakkaaseen auktoriteettiin, etenkään jos lähtökohtainen asetelma on se, että sinä et ole kauhean paljoa vanhempi kuin opetettavat. Joku vanhempi opettaja, jolla voi olla jotain nimeä, niin tällaiselle voi se voimakkaampi, pelottavampi auktoriteetti sopia paremmin.

*Olli: I do not believe in too strong an authority, especially if the starting point is that you are not terribly much older than the ones being taught. For some older teacher who may have name recognition, a stronger, scarier authority may be more appropriate.*

As we can see from the examples above, each teacher defines teacher authority a bit differently. Their personal teaching experience and their personalities are different, which might explain this to a certain extent. Also, it appears that teacher authority is not that negative of a concept, even though two of the participants are not that comfortable with the concept, as according to them it has some negative connotations. Still, for the majority teacher authority is not necessarily a negative concept. It is possible that this is because each teacher sees authority in their own way, and they themselves can decide how they interpret it in practice, i.e., how they act in the classroom. Nobody is forcing them to act in a certain way, or how they should exercise authority. I will also discuss to what extent the participants feel they can be themselves in classroom in Section 4.4.6.

However, there are some similarities as well in how the participants define authority. They stress pedagogical knowledge and the leadership that stems from it, but it is important to realize that the leadership is not one-way, or monological. Appreciation, and positive atmosphere which builds from mutual respect and good behaviour appear to be building blocks for functioning teacher authority. It is very close to what Burbules (1993, cited in Harjunen 2002) call dialogical relationship (see Figure 1). According to this theory, all pedagogy is based on cooperation and mutual appreciation, and not on teacher obedience. This means that teacher expertise alone is not enough to construct teacher authority. The participants also seem to stress points very similar to Puolimatka's (1997) view of legitimate authority. Positive classroom atmosphere is valued by the participants, and the well-being of both the students and the participants (teachers) themselves is highly appreciated.

Still, it is a very difficult task to define teacher authority. Even though there are similarities between the definitions the participants and the theory give, teacher authority still seems to mean a variety of things for different teachers. This is partly because teacher authority is still to some level misunderstood as a negative concept, because of stigma that surrounds it for historical reasons. However, there are some points that were stated regularly by the interviewees, such as authority should be adapted differently based on the learner group and their age or based on individual teachers' age and personality. The fact that the teacher is an adult gives the responsibility for them, and this leadership should be implemented so that it is for the best of the learners. As Määttä and Uusiautti (2012: 26-27) state, it is a matter of asymmetric relationship between the teacher and the learners, and this imbalance creates the need for a positive learning environment. The learners are at the center of teaching, and teachers seem to value their comfort a lot. Teacher reliability and credibility are traits that are considered important in this regard.

The power of the teacher is emphasized to some extent, but not so much from the point of view of coercion, but the responsibility and leadership that leads to the good of the students. It seems that interaction is seen as a more central part, at least to the extent that the term teacher authority is shunned by two of the participants. I interpret it that teacher authority is equated with discipline and power, which are often considered negative terms. However, certain degrees of discipline are required, as is also shown in Olli's response to what teacher's authority means for him:

Example: 8

Olli: Sanotaanko riittävän kurin pito, jotta järjestys säilyy.

*Olli: Let us say enough discipline in order to maintain order.*

The reason I am interested in the definitions of authority is also to find out whether indeed there are some negative connotations with the concept of teacher authority, like Pace and Hemmings (2007) claim. Two of the participants recognize that there is some negativity surrounding the concept of teacher authority.

Example 9.

Marjatta: Minusta tuntuu, että ne päivät ovat takana, jolloin edes käytetään paljolti tätä käsitettä. Eli se kuvaa jo sitä käsitettä.

*Marjatta: I feel like those days are behind us when we even use this concept. That already describes the concept.*

Example 10.

Aino: Auktoriteetti minun mielestäni kalskahtaa vanhanaikaiselta ja negatiiviselta sanalta, mutta sille voi olla myös positiivinen (merkitys), semmoinen että minun ei tarvitse olla

vaativa, tai minun ei tarvitse pomottaa, tai vanhanaikaisesti sanottuna kyykyttää ketään, ja sillä tavalla vaatia sitä auktoriteettia. Silloin se ei ole minun mielestäni negatiivinen sana. Nimenomaan ajattelee sen arvostuksen kautta. ... Minä arvostan oppilaiden työtä ja he arvostavat minun työtäni

*Aino: Authority, I think, sounds like an old-fashioned and negative word, but it can also have a positive (meaning), such that I do not have to be demanding, or I do not have to boss around, or, in old-fashioned terms, oppress anyone, and thus demand authority. Then I do not think that is a negative word. Specifically thinking it through appreciation. ... I value the work of the students and they appreciate my work.*

Aino's comment shows that even though it is possible that *teacher authority* is somewhat a negative term, it can also be viewed in a positive light. It appears that most of the interviewees connect the concept to positive features or characteristics of a teacher or features that help to bring out the best in their students.

## 4.2 Origins of authority

In reply to the question, where teacher authority derives from, the answers of the participants vary greatly as well. Two of the participants, Ville and Ilona, stress that teacher authority is a quality they possess, which has a lot to do with hereditary factors and/or upbringing. Three of the participants, Olli, Elisabeth, and Aino, emphasize the role of close and personal connection with the learners. Marjatta highlights the importance of taking responsibility for the occupation of a teacher. The following two examples demonstrate the view that teacher authority is a quality.

Example 11.

Ilona: Se on minussa oleva ominaisuus, joka on ollut alusta saakka. Minä en ole joutunut painimaan työrauhaongelmien kanssa koskaan. Auktoriteetti minussa on ollut jo pienenä tyttönä. Se on luonteenpiirre minun mielestäni. ... Minun mielestäni auktoriteettia on tosi vaikeaa opettaa. ... Silloin kun minä olen aloittanut opettajan työt niin kotikasvatus ja hyvä käytös oli kunniassa oleva asia. Koen että ryhmät olivat helpompia siihen aikaan. Vauhti on kasvanut vuosien myötä.

*Ilona: It is a feature in me that I have had since the beginning. I have never had to wrestle with issues that have to do with a peaceful studying environment. The authority in me has been as a little girl already. I think it is a characteristic. ... In my opinion, teacher authority is very hard to teach. ... When I started to work as a teacher, upbringing and good behavior were valued. I feel that the groups were easier at the time. The pace has grown over the years.*

Example 12.

Ville: Perinnölliset tekijät siinä määrin, että millainen on muuten ihmisenä. Niin vaikuttahan se omaan auktoriteettiin. Kyllähän sitä samaa tapaa tehdä asioita on sovellettava työsään.

*Ville: Hereditary factors to the extent that how you are as a person. Thus, it affects your own authority. You must apply the same manner to do things also at work.*

According to these views, teacher authority is a quality, or a trait that a person either has or does not have. It would be a possible explanation for I experienced that teacher authority was not taught to a great extent during my studies at the university. However, not all the participants agree with this view. The following three examples bring up a view that a teacher with his/her actions can affect to whether teacher authority is formed or not. This is an encouraging thought for every teacher who is struggling with authority issues. It is possible that it can be learnt, or at least it can be in the hands of the teachers themselves. Elisabeth's point (example 13) shows that she is consciously battling against her inherent shyness by trying to get as close to the learners as possible. Examples 14 and 15 also stress a personal connection with the learners.

Example 13.

*Elisabeth: Kun itse olen ollut aika hiljainen ja arkakin lapsena ja nuorena, niin jollakin tavalla minä olen halunnut hyvin lähelle niitä oppilaita ja juuri sellaisen oppimistilanteen, jossa oppilas voi vapaasti olla.*

*Elisabeth: As I have been pretty quiet and timid in my childhood and youth, in some way I have always wanted to be very close to the students and a learning situation, in which the student can be freely/casually.*

Example 14.

*Olli: Juuri sosiaaliset taidot, kaverillisuus, ja sitten sen jälkeen alan asiantuntijuus on seuraava.*

*Olli: It is social skills, friendliness, and then the expertise in the field that follows.*

Example 15.

*Aino: Mutta jos se (auktoriteetti) on sitä arvostusta mitä ajattelen sen olevan, niin se tulee minun mielestäni siitä vaan että miten minä kohtelen niitä ihmisiä, jotka ovat minun lähelläni. ... Lempeästi ohjaan, että minä kunnioitan sinua, niin kunnioita sinä minua.*

*Aino: But if it (authority) means appreciation like I think, then I think it comes from how I treat the people who are close to me. ... I gently direct that I respect you, respect me back.*

Finally, the third view about the origins of teacher authority is exemplified in the following view by Marjatta. She stresses that the profession of a teacher entails taking responsibility as the only adult in the classroom. As she has chosen the teacher's job, she must act accordingly.

Example 16.

*Marjatta: Se on sitä minun vastuunottoani siitä tehtävästä, mihin minä olen lähtenyt.*

*Marjatta: It is taking responsibility of the job I have taken.*

As we can see from the responses above, the views about the origins of teacher authority vary greatly. To some extent there seems to be a consensus that teacher authority is not something one can learn, but rather an inborn quality of a person. Still, Elisabeth's response shows that she has consciously fought against the shyness she has had as a young girl, and one can argue that she has indeed learned it. It seems that for some teachers, authority comes more naturally as for others. In that sense, there is no need for worry even if a teacher questions his/her authority. It does not come that easy for everyone. People are different, and in my opinion, it is what makes the world beautiful.

### 4.3 The role of the learner group

In this section I will inspect to what extent the learner group in question affects the formation of authority. First, I will examine negative attitudes in the classroom, after which I will move on to discuss situations with no experiences of teacher authority. Then I will look at whether teacher or the learners/group is considered more important by the participants. Finally, I will briefly discuss pedagogical love and experiences of success. Together these aspects will attempt to create a comprehensive view of the importance of the group when it comes to constructing teacher authority.

#### 4.3.1 Negative attitudes in the classroom

The attitudes that the learners have affect teacher authority greatly. As I pointed out in the theoretical background, there is always tension in the classroom, and it is either constructive or destructive (Määttä and Uusiautti 2012). It is also interesting to hear the views the participants have on the attitudes in the classroom, as according to some research the youth of today respects authority a lot less than before (e.g. Kyriacou 2009, cited in Ojala et al. 2019).

Example 17.

Marjatta: Ryhmässä joku tosi vaikutusvaltainen ja tietyllä tavalla valtaa omaava oppilas voi tosi paljon vaikuttaa siihen, miten opettajaan asennoidutaan. ... Ryhmässä olevat yksittäiset jäsenet voivat paljon vaikuttaa siihen, miten helposti hyväksytään opettajan valta tai opettajan joku asenne.

*Marjatta: In a group, a student who is very influential and has some power in a way, can affect the attitudes towards the teacher a lot. Individual members in a group can have a large impact on how easily teacher's power or teacher's attitude is accepted.*



In the example above Marjatta explains how much power a certain learner can have in a group. This can affect the attitudes in the classroom greatly, which can even be harmful to the learning of others in the group, as the following example shows.

Example 18.

Aino: Jos luokan sosiaalinen johtaja suhtautuu positiivisesti opettajaan tai oppiaineeseen, niin hän vie mukanaan koko porukkaa. ... On ollut semmoinen luokka, jossa luokan sosiaalinen johtaja ei kauheasti välttämättä pitänyt oppiaineesta tai muusta, niin oli kauhean vaikeaa niiden, jotka tykkäsivät ja halusivat ja joilla olisi ollut paljonkin minulle kerrottavaa näyttää se, että olet kiva ja kanssasi on kiva tehdä töitä.

*Aino: If the social leader of the class has a positive attitude towards the teacher or the subject, then he/she will take the whole group with him/her. ... I have had a class in which the social leader did not like the subject or anything else, so it was terribly difficult for those who liked and wanted and who would have had a lot to tell me to show that you are nice, and it is nice to work with you.*

We can decipher, that there should only be one person with authority in the classroom, so that everyone would feel comfortable in the classroom, and so that learning would be secured. Sometimes it is very difficult, however, especially in situations in which a teacher goes to teach a group that he/she is not familiar with, and there already are social leaders in the group in question. In these kinds of situations, it is much harder to form authority. The following example shows this very well.

Example 19.

Ilona: Olen muutaman kerran ollut semmoisessa tilanteessa, että olen saanut ryhmän tai luokan, jossa johtajuus on ollut oppilailla. Yleensä se on johtunut siitä, että luokan oma opettaja on ollut paljon sairauslomalla. Kun tulet kesken vuoden opettamaan jotain ryhmää, joka on ihan levällään ollut, ja se johtajuushan aina otetaan. Joku johtaa aina ryhmää. Silloin helposti, jos oma opettaja on paljon pois, niin johtajuus on luokassa tiedostamattomana. ... Niissä kohtaa on joutunut rakentamaan ihan eri tavalla sitä auktoriteettia. Erittäin pitkällä ja johdonmukaisella työllä.

*Ilona: I have been a couple of times in a situation that I have got a group or a class in which the students have had the leadership. Usually, it is because their own teacher has been on sick leave a lot. When you come in the middle of the year to teach a group, that has been all over the place, and leadership is always taken by someone. Someone always leads the group. Then easily, if the regular teacher is absent a lot, then the leadership is in the classroom unconsciously. ... Then I have had to build authority in a completely different way. With a very long and consistent work.*

In the interviews several participants brought up that it can be very stressful for the teachers to meet a new group for the above-mentioned reason. Someone always has authority in the classroom, and the first meetings with a new group can affect a lot to how it is going to go in the future. I will discuss this further in Section 4.4.1.

### 4.3.2 Situations with no authority

The situation that Ilona describes above (example 19) is also a great example of a situation with no teacher authority. According to Vikainen (1984), it can be that no

authority forms between the teacher and the learner(s). She argues, that in these kinds of situations the learner is the determining factor, whether authority develops or not. The interviewees also state that in these kinds of situations there is not much the teacher can do to construct authority. These external factors can prove more significant than the teacher himself/herself, and how his/her actions are like. In the following examples, Marjatta and Aino clarify this.

#### Example 20.

Marjatta: Niitähän tulee jatkuvasti missä aikuisen valta halutaan kyseenalaistaa. Se kuuluu tietyllä tavalla nuoren kehityskaaren yhdeksi osaksi, että kyseenalaistetaan se mitä aikuinen edustaa tai mitä koulu edustaa tai mitä koulussa olevat asiat edustavat. ... Sinänsä että minä kokisin, että se välttämättä kohdistuu minun auktoriteettiini, niin koen että se kohdistuu välillä siihen mitä minä edustan, mikä rooli minulla siellä on.

*Marjatta: There are constantly situations in which the power of the adult is questioned. In a way, it is a part of the development of a youngster that they question what the adult represents or what the school represents or what the things in the school represent. ... I feel that it is not necessarily directed at my authority per se, but I think sometimes it is directed at what I represent, what is my role there.*

#### Example 21.

Aino: Joo, on ollut tilanteita, jossa lapsella ei ole mitään aikomustakaan noudattaa ohjeita tai pelata säännön mukaan. Se tilanne on ollut ehkä siitä, että oppilaalla on ollut huono päivä, tai hänellä on ollut tunnekuohu päällä.

*Aino: Yes, I have had situations in which a child has no intention of following instructions or playing by any rules. That situation may have been because the student had a bad day, or he/she had an emotional turmoil.*

To highlight the importance of these factors that are out of the hands of the teachers, none of the participants remember that they have had a situation, in which they felt they did not have enough knowhow or expertise that had led to a situation with no sense of teacher authority. Instead, it is most often because of the relationships and attitudes within the classroom. Also, even though it might seem that their authority is being questioned, it might not have to do with their authority at all. It can just be that the learners are having a bad day, or that they do not like the matter being taught.

### 4.3.3 “The group is the soil.”

A teacher cannot do much if learners are misbehaving. The options a teacher has are limited, and the people outside school world, such as parents of the learners, can judge the actions of the teacher. Therefore, teachers must be careful when it comes to handling misbehaving learners. The authority teachers have does not mean that they can act in a way that can be harmful to the learners. Olli brings this up in the following example.

#### Example 22.

Olli: Opettajan oikeudet voi olla aika rajalliset, ja opettajan omaan käyttäytymiseen voi ottaa helposti ulkopuolelta kiinni, ja se voidaan nähdä hyvin tuomittavaksi. Ne ovat aika haastavia tilanteita, kuinka kovaa pystyt antamaan takaisin, jos joku juniori alkaa haastamaan.

*Olli: The teacher's rights can be quite limited, and the behaviour of the teacher can be interfered from the outside, and it can be considered very reprehensible. They are quite challenging situations, how much you can give back if some junior starts to challenge you.*

This way teacher authority does not mean the same thing as coercion in a modern society, and I think it is one of the reasons why some of the participants do not like the concept of teacher authority. Teacher authority does not have to be a negative concept, however. It has a lot to do with the group, how teacher authority manifests itself in the classroom. The group is what makes the teaching situation easy or difficult. Ilona portrays the group as the soil of the classroom, which I think describes the importance of the group very well.

#### Example 23.

Ilona: Ryhmä on tavallaan sellainen maaperä siinä luokassa, ja on paljon erilaisia maaperiä. Joidenkin ryhmien kanssa vuorovaikutus lähtee sulavasti ja helposti liikkeelle, ja eri syistä voi olla niitä tekijöitä, jotka vaikeuttavat kokonaista ryhmädynamiikkaa. Eli joutuu työstämään enemmän ja tietoisemmin. ... Mutta jos on jouheva porukka, niin tavallaan olet ja elät niiden kanssa. Toki se on tiedostettava silloinkin, mutta sinun ei tarvitse olla niin tiedostava koko ajan.

*Ilona: In a way, the group is the soil is in the classroom, and there are lots of different soils. Interaction with some groups goes smoothly and easily, and for a variety of reasons there can be factors that hinder the overall group dynamics. So, you must work harder and more consciously. ... But if there is a good group, then you are and you live with them. Sure, it is conscious even then, but you do not have to be so conscious all the time.*

It appears that each of the participants think that the importance of the group is great. The group in question affects the whole dynamics greatly, and it can even be argued that the whole teaching event is built on the group dynamic, as Ilona points out in the example above.

#### **4.3.4 Is the teacher or the learner more important when building teacher authority?**

As the role of the learner group appears to be extremely important, it leads us to the question, whether the teacher or the learner is more important in the formation of authority. As I mentioned in the background chapter, there are opposing views regarding this. In addition to Vikainen's (1984) argument that in situations with no teacher authority the learner is the determining factor, Ziehe (1992, cited in Harjunen 2002: 149) stresses that teacher authority is just an aid for the self-development of the

learners. VanderStaay et al. (2009), on the other hand, stress that teachers possess professionalism because of their expert knowledge, and therefore teachers can be considered more important when it comes to forming authority. Still, it is a matter of agreement rather than obedience or teacher control.

The participants of the present study are according to the latter of the views. 5/6 of them say that teacher is more important when it comes to forming authority. The reasons for this vary, but the fact that there is usually only one teacher in a classroom is highlighted, and the responsibilities and trust that derives from it. The one differing view by Ilona does not disregard the importance of the teacher, however, but instead stresses the importance of interaction between the teacher and the learners.

#### Example 24.

Ilona: Näen, että auktoriteetti on vuorovaikutusta oppilaiden kanssa. Tavallaan semmoinen tila missä ollaan, eli siihen vaikuttaa sekä opettaja itse että myös se ryhmä. Ryhmien kanssa ei olla samalla tavalla vaan nimenomaan, kun se on vuorovaikutustilanne se opetustilanne ja se, miten koulussa ollaan, niin se on molemminpuolista vaikuttamista.

*Ilona: In my opinion authority is interaction with the students. In a way, it is a condition in which you are, so both the teacher and the group affect it. You do not act the same way with different groups, as the teaching event and the way we are in school is an interactive situation, so it is a case of mutual influence.*

Ilona's view is, therefore, in line with Burbules's (1993, cited in Harjunen 2002) idea of dialogical relationship. She states that teacher-learner relationship has to do with mutual influence, which is exactly what Burbules stresses as well. The teacher and learner are in constant interaction and can learn from one another. However, it is necessary to remark that even though the other participants stress the importance of the teacher in this regard, it does not mean that they would not appreciate the dialogical relationship with the learners. Especially considering their definitions of teacher authority that are described in Section 4.1. Also, even though they stress the importance of the teacher, the answers reflect loving and caring views, like Elisabeth's comment shows in example 25.

#### Example 25.

Elisabeth: Kyllä se on opettaja siinä mielessä, että en alkaisi koskaan huutamaan koska se on aivan tyhmintä, enkä itkemään. Vaan ottaa se rakkaus. Kyllä vieläkin teroitin sitä, että sen rakkauden pitää näkyä, sen pedagogisen rakkauden, ja sen iloisen oppimisen. ... Kuutoseen asti ne kaipaavat sitä, että niillä on turvallinen olo. Ja opettaja katsoo niitä kiltisti, ei pahasti, vaikka olisi mikä tilanne.

*Elisabeth: It is the teacher in the sense that I would never start shouting because it is the most stupid thing to do, nor crying. But to take a loving approach. I further emphasize that love must be visible, pedagogical love, and happy learning. ... Until sixth grade they need to feel safe. And the teacher looks at them kindly, not badly, no matter the situation.*

Elisabeth stresses the importance of pedagogical love. In a way, her view shows similar points that Määttä and Uusiautti (2012) stress in Figure 2, which is that teachers need to balance teacher authority and pedagogical love in order to make sure that the needs of individual learners are met the best way possible.

#### 4.3.5 Experiences of success

Pedagogical love is also evident in teachers' efforts to give learners experiences of success. The teachers in this study agree that experiences of success are vital, and some say that maybe they are even the most important part of the teachers' work. It is also what Vikainen (1984) claims. According to the participants, teacher authority builds, for instance, from encouraging the learners and making sure they get experiences of success.

Example 26.

Elisabeth: Kyllä se on koko elämän tärkein asia ollut, että olen aina sanonut, että kun oppilas valittaa, että minä en osaa, niin minä sanon: voi kuule, me kaikki osataan jotakin, ei me kukaan kaikkia osata, mutta aina kaikki osaa jotakin. Ja minä olen aina saanut hyvän palautteen, minuahan on oppilaat rakastanut. Metsä vastaa niin kuin sinne huudetaan.

*Elisabeth: Yes, it has been the most important thing in life, and I have always said that when a student complains that I do not know/I am not able to, I say: Listen, we all know something, none of us knows everything, but always everyone knows something. And I have always received good feedback, the students have loved me. The forest will answer as one shouts into it.*

By using a common Finnish idiom, *the forest will answer as one shouts into it* (meaning roughly *what goes around, comes around*), Elisabeth in a way underlines dialogical relationship between the teacher and the learner. The way the teacher treats the learners, they will treat the teacher as well. Even though she sees the teacher as the most important person when it comes to building teacher authority, it appears that her view stresses interaction as well. This can be the case for the other participants as well. Even though they state that the teacher is the most important person in that regard, it does not mean that they do not stress the importance of interaction as well.

In addition, it is stated that the experiences of success should be seen in the level of the group as well, in addition to the level of individual students. Also, it is brought up that the experiences of success can happen in school even if they have nothing to do with teaching or learning events.

Example 27.

Ilona: Onnistumisen kokemukset ovat elintärkeitä oppimisen kannalta koska onnistumisen kokemuksista syntyy oppimista. Ja epäonnistumisen kokemus, se hidastaa oppimista. ... Meidän työssämme tärkeimpiä tehtäviä on saada onnistumisen kokemuksia luokassa yksittäisissä oppilaissa, mutta tavallaan myös ryhmänä onnistumisen kokemuksia. Aina pitää ajatella sekä ryhmää että oppilasta yksilönä.

*Ilona: Experiences of success are vital to learning because they give rise to learning. And an experience of failure, it slows down learning. ... One of the most important tasks in our jobs is to get experiences of success in individual students, but also as a group. One always must think of both the group and individual students.*

However, even though experiences of success are extremely important, they cannot be guaranteed. This can be a risk for teacher authority as well, as the teacher cannot provide learners with one of the most important things for their learning, the positive experiences of learning. Still, each teacher should aspire to make sure that each learner can get experiences of pleasure from learning and feel that they are capable and intelligent.

Example 28.

*Marjatta: Onnistumisen kokemuksen haku niin oikeastaan sen kaiken mistä siinä opettamisessa on kyse, mihin haluaa pyrkiä. Sitä ei voi taata, mutta siihen voi pyrkiä. ... Minä en voi taata sitä koskaan, koska tilanteet vaihtuvat nopeasti. ... Ryhmän ilmapiiri ja kaikki se mitä siinä päivässä tapahtuu luo onnistumista tai epäonnistumisen kokemusta.*

*Marjatta: The search for the experience of success is what teaching is all about, what you want to strive for. It cannot be guaranteed, but it can be pursued. ... I can never guarantee it, as the situations change quickly. ... The atmosphere of the group and everything that happens that day creates the experience of success or failure.*

It is also stressed that passion is needed from the teacher to create experiences of success for students. Interaction is important in this regard as well. In addition, it is pointed out that learners require a genuinely interested, constant presence of the teacher (and in that respect a feeling of security). The following example brings up these views that are shared by each of the participants excellently.

Example 29.

*Aino: Siitä tulee ne onnistumisen kokemukset, kun oppilaan ei tarvitse tuskailla ja miettiä että osaanko minä tai ymmärränkö, tai en minä tajua.*

*Aino: The experiences of success come when the student does not have to worry and think whether I can or understand, or I do not understand.*

In addition to the points stated above, feedback is considered one of the most important factors when it comes to experiences of success by three of the participants. There are opposing opinions to what extent the successes of individual learners should be brought to the attention of the parents, but the general consensus is to focus more on the success than picking on weaknesses and mistakes. Some of the participants feel that involving homes too much is unnecessary sometimes, but some think that it can motivate the learners to keep up with good work.

### 4.3.6 Summary

It appears that the role of the group is great when it comes to teacher authority, even though the participants see that the role of the teacher is even greater to some extent. It is a question of constant interaction in the classroom, in which each part is important. Even though the engine might be considered the most important part of a motor vehicle, it would not function without wheels or a Cardan shaft. It is the same thing in a classroom. What makes a functioning classroom environment is that each part is functioning correctly. Both the teacher and the learners need to have mutual respect and appreciation, and they both need to be happy to be in the classroom. It is an easy thing to say, but in reality it is a complex and ideal aspiration.

## 4.4 The personality of the teacher

In this section I will focus more profoundly on the personality of the teacher and how it is connected to the perceived teacher authority by the participants. I will start by discussing first meetings with the group, as they are often considered one of the most crucial things when it comes to creating group dynamics and giving either a positive or a negative image of the teacher, which can last a long time (Human et al. 2012; Tetlock 1983). In Section 4.4.1 I will aim to discover, whether these claims match the views of the participants. After that I will discuss the appearance of the teacher, teacher charisma and personality, and teacher status more profoundly in terms of teacher authority.

### 4.4.1 First meetings

Each of the six participants consider that first meetings are pivotal in relation to building teacher authority. For instance, it was highlighted that it can be difficult to change the initial view the students have, and that the first actions the teacher takes with a new group can give an example for the learners about how they are allowed to act in the future. Therefore, teachers should be extremely cautious and conscious about the first class they have with a new group. Also, it was stated that student knowledge is one of the most powerful tools a teacher can have, and teachers are lacking it when meeting a new group. The following Olli's view was echoed in the opinions of several participants.

Example 30.

Olli: Kyllä (on tärkeää), että saa tilanteen heti haltuun ja auktoriteettiaselman muodostettua, koska sitten jos nolaa itsensä opetettavien silmissä tai ei pysty muodostamaan riittävän suurta auktoriteettia heti alkuun niin sitä voi olla aika vaikea paikata ja saada takaisin

sitten myöhemmin, kun oppilaat on saaneet ensivaikutelman ja luoneen sinusta jonkinlaisen kuvan. Ja että minkälaista käyttäytymistä sinä sallit opetustilassa, etenkin ensimmäinen oppitunti, ensivaikutelma.

*Olli: Yes, (it is important) that you get a hold of the situation immediately and form authority, as if you embarrass yourself in the eyes of your learners or you cannot form authority strong enough right from the start, it can be difficult to patch up and to get it back later, when the students have created an image of you. And what kind of behaviour you allow in the teaching situation, especially the first lesson, the first impression.*

Although the first impressions are perceived as very important, three of the participants believe that first impressions can be changed over time, as can be seen in the following examples. This contradicts the views of Human et al. (2012) and Tetlock (1983) about the permanence of first impressions. Still, none of the participants think that the first meetings would not be important.

#### Example 31.

Marjatta: Ensikohtaaminen on tärkeä, mutta minä keventäisin ehkä siitä tulevaa turhaakin kuormaa. Perusasteella me olemme tekemisissä lasten ja nuorten kanssa, jotka vasta muodostavat käsitystään itsestään ja kaikesta siitä mitä koulu heille eteen heittää. Ensivaikutelma voi molemmiin puolin olla sitä ja tätä, mutta se muuttuu.

*Marjatta: The first meeting is important, but I would maybe lighten that unnecessary burden. In basic school, we are dealing with children and young people who are only forming their own perceptions of themselves and everything the school throws at them. The first impression can on both sides be this and that, but it changes.*

#### Example 32.

Aino: Yritän käyttää aikaa siihen, että kun saan uuden ryhmän eteen, ne me vähän käytämme aikaa siihen tutustumiseen, molemminpuoliseen tutustumiseen. ... Luon minun luokkani säännöt, miten käyttäydyt, miten puhut opettajalle, miten puhut kaverille, saako toisen puhetta kommentoida, saako toista korjata, kaikkea tämmöistä. ... Jos siinä sählää, ei kohtaa oppilasta, ei katso silmiin, ei kuuntele, ei kysele, niin aika hukkaan heitettyä aikaa. ... Voi se (ensivaikutelma) olla jossain määrin pysyvä, mutta kyllä sitä tietysti voi muuttaakin.

*Aino: When I meet a new group, I try to take the time so that we learn to know each other. ... I create the rules of my class, how you behave, how you talk to the teacher, how do you talk to a friend, whether you can comment on the speech of another student, whether the others can be corrected, things like that. ... If you fail in that, you do not face the student, do not look into the eyes, do not listen, do not ask, it is time wasted. ... It may (the first impression) be somewhat permanent, but of course it can be changed.*

Aino's view in example 32 shows that the first meetings are also related to teacher authority in the sense of discipline and rules, which are set in the first meetings. Also, in example 30 Olli points out a similar standpoint by saying that in the first meetings the teacher has to make it clear for the learners how they are allowed and expected to act. Even though the first impressions are not necessarily permanent according to the views of several of the participants, they are crucial in this sense as well.



#### 4.4.2 The appearance of the teacher

It is difficult to say to what extent the appearance of the teacher affects teacher authority. In a modern day, it can feel even ridiculous to point out that the appearance of the teacher would be important or even worth mentioning, as in the modern world everyone is free to choose their own looks and it is commonly accepted that all the people should be treated equal. Still, even in modern research appearance is sometimes understood as a form of nonverbal communication (Kamila 2012). Also, appearance can be very crucial for the teachers, as still in modern day they are often considered role models and model citizens (Kamila 2012).

The findings from the interviews show very different opinions regarding the appearance of the teacher. Whereas some of the participants think that appearance is very important, some think that it does not make any difference. In fact, it is the question which gave the most differing answers from the large group of interview questions (see Appendix). Elisabeth even thinks that her appearance might have been one of the most significant factors for her to get the job.

Example 33.

Elisabeth: Siksihän minä olen päässytkin (opettajan töihin), kun olen pieni ja sieväkin vielä ollut silloin. Kyllä minä omalla pienellä olemuksellani olen varmaan tehnyt vaikutuksen niihin.

*Elisabeth: That is why I have gotten (teacher's job) as I am small and then I was cute too. I have made an impression with my small appearance, I guess.*

It was also brought up that the appearance might be more important within certain learner groups based on the age of the learners. Especially the view that teenagers might create different impressions of teachers based on their looks and the way they dress seem to be shared by several of the participants. Still, the participants do not let these views affect their own style of dressing. Ville's response brings up views that are shared by several of the participants.

Example 34.

Ville: Minä luulen että (opettajan vaatteilla, siltä miltä näyttää) yläkoululaisille sillä on heidän ajatuksissansa merkitystä, mutta ei omalta kannalta. Mutta ne ovat semmoisia juttuja, mitkä vähenevät sitten koulu-uran aikana varmasti.

*Ville: I think that (the teacher's clothes, how you look like) has an importance for students in secondary school, but not for me. But they are the kind of stuff that will diminish over the course of the school career.*

Ville emphasizes that the clothes a teacher chooses to wear might be important for teenagers, but with age they become less important. This means that the appearance might have some significance. Even though this view is shared across several

participants, some participants share a totally opposing view. Ilona and Olli do not think that appearance is important at all, but instead the personality of the teacher is important, or that authority is completely a mental state. It is interesting, how differently the participants feel about the appearance. Also, there do not seem to be any consistencies based on the age or teaching experience of the participants.

Example 35.

Olli: Asiallisuus ja rauhallisuus ovat tärkeitä. Vastakohtahan olisi hätäisyys ja erinäiset virheet ja opetettavasta asiasta poikkeaminen.

*Olli: Propriety and calmness are important. The opposite would be haste and various mistakes and deviation from what is being taught.*

Example 36.

Ilona: Minä en oikein voi kokea (että on tärkeä). Olen tämmöinen pikkunen pallero itse. Jos mietitään auktoriteettia ja sitten pistetään minut siihen näköpiiriin niin ei ensimmäisenä tule mieleen auktoriteetti. Ja sitten taas koen, että minulla ei ole koskaan ollut ongelmia auktoriteetin kanssa. Minun mielestäni ulkoinen olemus ei vaikuta siihen, kyllä se on henkinen tila se auktoriteetti.

*Ilona: I cannot really think that (it is important). I am a small person myself. If we think of authority and then you put me in sight, authority does not come to mind first. And again, I experience that I have never had problems with authority. In my opinion, appearance does not affect it, authority is a mental state.*

In addition to the points above, it is clarified by Marjatta that appreciating/valuing authority depends totally on upbringing. If at home children are being taught to respect diversity, then it is most likely being mirrored in the way the children view their teachers. In that sense, Marjatta's view shares aspects from the two opposing views, whether the appearance of the teacher is important at all.

Example 37.

Marjatta: Riippuu aina oppilaasta. Jos meillä on sellaisen kodin kasvatti, joka on jo kotoa käsin saanut valmiudet kohdata erilaisuutta, hyväksyä erilaista tapaa olla aikuinen tai käyttää valtaa, niin silloin opettajan ulkonäkö ei välttämättä ole se kynnyskysymys.

*Marjatta: It always depends on the student. If we have a child from a home in which he/she has been taught to face difference, to accept different ways of being an adult or to exercise power, then the appearance of a teacher is not necessarily so important.*

There are also views according to which appearance plays no role in building teacher authority. This might be because of the age of the learners. Aino teaches in primary school and judging from her view and her word choices (*tiitiäinen*, which is a playful term for a young child), it appears that it is indeed young learners that do not care about the appearance of the teacher.

Example 38.

Aino: En minä nyt tiedä, onko ulkoisella olemuksella merkitystä. Ihan samalla tavalla nuo tiitiäiset hyppäävät kaulaan tuolta aina.

*Aino: I do not know whether appearance is important at all. Those kids embrace the teachers the same way no matter what.*

It seems that the age of the learner plays a big role whether the appearance of the teacher is important when it comes to teacher authority. In primary school it does not seem to be very important. Teenagers, who are more in keeping with the modern trends, seem to value the appearance a lot more. Still, it is difficult to tell how much that affects teacher authority, as some of the participants see no importance when it comes to teacher appearance, and still they feel they are respected in the classroom and that they have authority.

#### **4.4.3 The charisma of the teacher**

Even though it is not clear to what extent the appearance of the teacher affects teacher authority, it is possible that the appearance affects charisma, and thus also authority. Aino brought up a memory from her secondary school days, and described her history teacher, who had an unbelievable charisma. She stated that the teacher always wore high heels and a dress, and all the classroom listened to her mesmerized. Even though she never had any slideshows or anything like that, she managed to make the classroom dead silent when she started to speak. This might suggest that some teachers have an innate charisma, which could be enough to form teacher authority. It also might be to some level connected to the appearance of the teacher, as Aino vividly remembers how that specific teacher looked like after all these years.

Aino also remembers a teacher who taught by using fear. However, she does not consider that this teacher had any charisma, as she thinks that charisma is a positive word, and has to do with positive features of a person. Maybe that is why three out of the six participants are not sure whether they have charisma. It is difficult to think of positive features about oneself. It is also possible that it is not known for sure what the concept of charisma entails. However, charisma is recognized in other teachers, as Aino's story of her history teacher shows.

Also, it is thought by several of the participants that charisma does make a difference, even though none of them can verbalize why it is so. It is also a question whether charisma is even needed if one has strong enough authority. Ilona, for instance, thinks that maybe interaction skills are more central than charisma.

Example 39.

Ilona: Omalla kohdalla on tosi vaikea ajatella (onko karismaa), koska en koe olevani millään tavalla karismaattisin ihminen. Mutta koen sen, että minulla on hyvät vuorovaikutustaidot.

*Ilona: For me, it is very difficult to think (do I have charisma) because I do not feel I am the most charismatic person by any means. But I think I have good interaction skills.*

It can also be possible that professionalism and expert knowledge might be enough for teachers to have authority. Maybe it is not necessary to consider the role of charisma significant, even though some teachers certainly do possess it and their authority can be explained by it for a great deal, as Aino proved with the story of her history teacher. Still, it was stated that several kinds of charisma are suitable for the teacher's profession. In the end, each teacher is different, and builds their authority on different elements.

Example 40.

Marjatta: Jos karismalla tarkoitetaan jotakin sisäsyntyistä mikä ihmisessä jo on, niin en voi väittää, etteikö joillakin olisi. Mutta opettajan ammatissa on kyse myöskin siitä, että tulee hyvä professionaalisuus. Aika monenlaiset karisimat sopivat siihen. En antaisi sille ihan hirveän suurta painoarvoa.

*Marjatta: If charisma refers to something innate that is already present in a person, then I cannot argue that some do not have it. But the teaching profession is also about having professionalism. Quite a variety of charismas fit that. I would not give it an awful lot of weight.*

It is interesting, how small the participants think the role of charisma is for them when it comes to their teacher authority. There seems to be a consensus that it is possible to achieve authority even without a certain kind of charisma. The views in that sense are in line with Smith's (1985, cited in Harjunen 2002: 302) claim that teacher authority is based on didactic skills and being a good person in general, as it does seem indeed that professionalism and the way the teacher communicates with the learners are substantial. And it makes sense. If charisma were the most important factor in building teacher authority, would it even make sense to educate future teachers? There has to be a lot more to teacher authority and a functioning classroom environment than just innate characteristics of a teacher, such as his/her charisma. Still, the importance of charisma cannot be downplayed, as for some teachers it is very important.

#### **4.4.4 Teacher status justifying authority**

As stated in the previous section, the participants seem to value professionalism over charisma. It raises a question of the importance of teacher status when it comes to building teacher authority. Each of the participants thinks that their status as a teacher brings authority by itself, at least in some ways, as is also suggested by Harjunen (2002: 298-301). Still, it seems that they do not equate authority that comes from the teacher status with obedience, but rather agreement, in line with the theory by VanderStaay et al. (2009: 273), as things such as being an authoritative teacher instead

of an authoritarian teacher was brought up. As stated by Baumrind (1966), authoritative teachers aim for the good of the learner by also taking the opinions of the learners into account instead of supporting coercion and power.

Example 41.

Ilona: Kyllä se (opettajan asema) oikeuttaa (auktoriteetin). Kyllä minun pitää tietää mitä siellä luokassa tehdään, ja minun pitää säädellä miten siellä luokassa toimitaan, eli koen että pitää aina pyrkiä hyvään ja oikeaan. ... Minulle auktoriteetti ei missään nimessä ole sama kuin autoritäärinen, mutta opettaja ohjaa toimintaa ja siinä pitää olla aina hyvä tarkoitusperä.

*Ilona: Yes it (teacher status) justifies (authority). I need to know what is going on in the classroom, and I have to regulate how the students act in the classroom, so I feel that one has always aim for the good and for the right. ... To me authority is by no means the same as authoritarian, but the teacher directs the actions, and it always needs to have a good purpose.*

Even though teachers should not be authoritarian, there needs to be some control by the teacher, which is agreed by each of the participants. There need to be clear lines and boundaries as to what is acceptable behaviour by the learners and by the teacher. For several of the participants the line seems to be that the actions should be done for the good of the learners.

It was also pointed out that authority guaranteed by teacher status alone does not necessarily show up as a positive learning experience for the students, but it is also a question of the personality of the teacher and the authority it brings along. For instance, a teacher may have authority based on his/her status, but if in addition to that authority is based on fear, for example, it is not a good thing.

#### **4.4.5 Friendliness vs. expert subject knowledge**

The personality of the teacher is also reflected in the way the teacher relates to the learners. As Määttä and Uusiautti (2012: 26-27) describe it, there is always asymmetric relationship between the teacher and the learners because the teacher knows more than the learners in the subject being taught. Still, some teachers take a friendly approach, while some aim to keep some distance to the learners and therefore to maintain their professional status above the learners. This more distant approach stresses professional authority, i.e., authority that derives from expert subject knowledge and pedagogical skills (VanderStaay et al. 2009).

In this regard there seems to be a difference between the views of the different participant groups. The participants who have had no teacher training, Ville and Olli, seem to value friendliness more than the teachers who have had teacher training. They state that they aim for friendliness, even though they also realize it might not work for everyone. This is perhaps the biggest difference that emerged between experienced and less experienced teachers.

On the other hand, also some more experienced teachers stress that in some situations, friendliness can be very important. Sometimes, for some learners, acting in a friendly manner can be the most crucial thing. The asymmetric relationship between the teacher and the learner is not always that clear. There are two sides, two personas, from which the teacher needs to select the one that is most suitable for the situation. Either a friendlier approach, or an approach which accentuates the leading role of a teacher.

Example 42.

Marjatta: Aina riippuu oppilaasta. Jossakin tilanteissa kaverillisuus on se ensimmäinen ja paras avain, minkä se oppilas tarvitsee. Siinä hämärtyy se raja, että ollaan koulussa, minä olen opettaja, sinä olet oppilas. Mutta on myös tilanteita, joissa nuori tarvitsee vain ja ainoastaan sen aikuisen, sen aikuisuuden nähdä tilanteet.

*Marjatta: It always depends on the learner. In some situations, friendliness is the first and the best key that the learner needs. The boundaries become blurry, that we are in school, I am the teacher, you are the student. But there are also situations in which a young person only needs the adult, and the adulthood to see the situations.*

Example 43.

Aino: On vaarallinen sana tuo kaverillinen. Olen kaverillinen heti kun me puhumme jostain muusta kuin siitä opetettavasta asiasta. ... Kun minä opetan, en ole kaverillinen. Se on niin kuin Jekyll ja Hyde.

*Aino: Friendly is a dangerous word. I am friendly as soon as we are talking about something else than the matter being taught. ... When I teach, I am not friendly. It is like Jekyll and Hyde.*

Still, it seems that the teachers with teacher training and more experience feel that a teacher cannot be friends with the learners. It shows the ability brought by experience to observe in which situations the student needs what kind of support and guidance. This does not, however, mean that the relationship between them would be distant, but the basis for the relationship cannot be friendship. This way the views of the interviewees are according to Määttä and Uusiautti's (2012) realization of asymmetric relationship between the teacher and the learners.

Example 44.

Ilona: Koen, että opettaja ei ole oppilaiden kaveri. Mutta tavallaan luulen, että ne oppilaat, jotka ovat minun luokassani eivät millään tavalla pidä minua etäisenä. Mutta opettajuutta ei voi rakentaa kaveripohjalle.

*Ilona: I think that the teacher is not a friend of the students. But in a way I believe that the students in my class do not in any way consider me distant. But one cannot build teaching based on friendship.*

Ilona's view is echoed in the views of the participants who have had teacher training. It is good that the teacher has a close relationship between the learners, but

the teacher needs to be careful where the borderline is, what is too friendly. But as it was mentioned, sometimes it is necessary to act friendly with the learners. I think, however, that friendliness should not be forced, as it can be easily noticed by the learners. In this way, it can be the best if the teachers can act like themselves in the classroom environment.

#### **4.4.6 To be, or not to be yourself in the classroom?**

The charisma and the personality of the teacher that were discussed in the earlier sections are also related to how teachers can be like themselves in the classroom. As I stated in the Introduction chapter of the present study, the reason I wanted to study teacher authority was to find out why I managed well in my teacher training, even though I do not consider myself a typical authoritative figure. Based on the findings by Ojala et al. (2019) that students obey a nice and kind teacher who teaches by using his/her own persona, I gave a hypothesis that maybe it explained my success. I stated that it was one of my goals to find out whether it is true that the ability and courage to be oneself in the classroom could be connected to teacher authority that strongly. It, indeed, appears to be like that, based on the analysis of the interviews.

To some extent each of the six interviewees feel that they can be themselves in the classroom, out of which five feel that they can be totally like themselves in the classroom. They see their colorful personalities as an advantage that can be used in a teaching event, even though they might be more cautious and filter out something based on the age of the learners.

The following response by Ilona covers well what these five interviewees think about the teacher persona. These teachers feel that they can be completely themselves, but that each teacher has several different personalities, certain features of which are more visible in different contexts. Being oneself does not mean one does not have any kind of filter and situational awareness, i.e., the skill to make right decisions based on the situation (Beck et al. 2015).

Example 45.

Ilona: Koen olevani täysin oma itseni opettajana siellä luokassa. Se miten olen luokassa ja miten olen oppilaiden kanssa, on täysin osa minua. Siinä ei ole mitään esittämistä tai mitään itselle vierasta. ... Mutta olen täysin erilainen sitten kun kävelen siihen opettajarhuoneeseen ja siellä olen opettajakollegoiden kanssa. Tai sitten, kun olen omien kavereiden kanssa vapaa-ajalla, niin olen täysin erilainen.

*Ilona: I feel completely myself as a teacher in the classroom. How I am in the classroom and how I am with the students is completely a part of me. I do not need to pretend anything nor is there anything foreign to me. ... But I am totally different when I walk into the teachers' lounge and I am with my teacher colleagues. Or when I am with my friends in my spare time, I am completely different.*

The example above also describes in a practical sense what Harjunen (2002: 299) calls impersonal authority. According to it, teachers choose to take impersonal courses of action in order to present the role of a teacher. Even though teachers remain themselves, they are not acting themselves. It is exactly what Ilona states in the previous example (example 45). Teachers are exactly like themselves in the classroom, but still, they have other personas that are more predominant in other contexts and situations.

In contrast to the five other participants, Olli feels that he has quite a strong teacher persona. He still has situational awareness, just as the five other interviewees whose views were described above, but he does not totally feel himself in the classroom. This can be explained by nervousness, for instance, which can be because of little teaching experience and training, as ease and self-confidence most probably come over time.

Example 46.

Olli: Ehkä on vähän jännittyneempi, että saa pidettyä tilan hallussa ja myös miellyttää opettavia. Ei pysty olemaan ihan omana itsenään. ... Erinäisistä ulkoisista tekijöistä johtuen oma persoonallisuus muokkautuu enemmän tai vähemmän.

*Olli: Perhaps one is a little more nervous, so that one can maintain the classroom in control and to please the learners. One cannot be totally oneself. ... Due to various external factors, one's own personality is being shaped more or less.*

In some situations, it might be useful to have a certain teacher persona, however. In the interviews it was noted that based on expertise a teacher persona might be created to protect the teacher in question, for instance when meeting parents of the learners regarding some difficult situations.

Example 47.

Marjatta: Joskus professionaalisuus myös suojelee. Esimerkiksi silloin kun on vaikeita kohtaamisia vanhempien kanssa, niin silloin mielestäni on ihan hyvä nojata siihen, että voi ajatella, että on oman työnsä asiantuntija.

*Marjatta: Sometimes professionalism also protects. For example, when there are difficult encounters with parents, then I think it is good to rely on thinking that one is an expert in one's own work.*

The ability and courage to be oneself appears to be very important. If a teacher does not need to pretend anything, the students will also recognize this and feel more comfortable in the classroom. Still, it is agreed by the participants that the roles should be clear in the classroom. There is only one teacher in the classroom, who has the responsibility of the learners.



#### **4.4.7 Summary**

In this section, the analysis has shown that there are very different kinds of authorities. Some teachers base their authority more on their personality and being themselves, while some base it more on professionalism and pedagogical competence. Perhaps that is why it is so difficult to teach authority, and why it is not being taught more in teacher training.

It is agreed by each of the participants that first meetings are extremely important, as they can give an impression for the learners that lasts for a long time, even though half of the participants think that first impressions can be changed over time.

There is no conclusion whether the appearance of the teacher is important when it comes to building teacher authority, as some think it is very important, whereas some think that is not important at all.

Teacher charisma is not regarded important, at least it is hard for the participants to recognize charisma within themselves. It is not clear how much charisma is needed, even though having charisma is certainly considered very useful and some teachers may even base their teacher profession and teacher authority on it.

Teacher status is considered as one of the main things that builds authority. Teacher status does not, however, mean coercion or obedience for any of the participants, but rather agreement is being stressed.

Friendliness is a subject which divides the opinions more. It does not explain authority for the more experienced teachers, even though those participants with no teacher training see it very important. On the other hand, for the participants with no formal training friendliness is considered very important.

### **4.5 Teachers' actions in the classroom**

In this section teachers' actions in the classroom will be discussed further. First, I will examine whether the participants think their role in the classroom is more that of an instructor or a teacher. Second, I will discuss to what extent the teachers aim to find different teaching methods. I will explore whether there are factors, such as too little time and resources, which could make it difficult to find different methods, and how this is reflected in teacher authority. Third, the importance and role of humor in the classroom will be investigated. Finally, classroom atmosphere and tension in the classroom will be discussed.

These four points will be utilized in answering the third research question, that is the importance of teachers' actions in terms of their authority, classroom

atmosphere and learner participation. The present study is interested in finding out to what extent the actions of the teachers have an effect on teacher authority.

#### 4.5.1 Teacher or instructor?

Surprisingly, the opinions of the participants regarding whether they consider their role to be an instructor/a mentor, or a teacher differ greatly. Also, it does not seem to be connected to their background, i.e., their teacher training and experience. It does seem, however, that their own school days affect greatly the way they act in the classroom themselves. They seem to have adapted the teachers' actions that they have noticed that have been helpful for themselves as young learners. Four of the six participants stress that being a teacher and being an instructor are equally important, whereas the two extremes are also represented by one participant stressing each of the extremes.

Only one of the participants, Ilona, feels that she is an instructor more than a teacher. She states that it is because for her it was very boring and difficult for her as a child to follow teachers who based their teaching on lecturing. Therefore, she aims consciously to be the opposite of that. She instructs more than teaches, which in practice means that she tries to speak as little as she can in class, and then to help individual learners if they need help or they have not understood everything from the brief teaching session.

Ville's view represents the polar opposite. As the most of his work experience is from teaching basic school, he has concluded that in basic school the learners need to be taught, not instructed. However, he recognizes that it depends greatly on the age of the learners, and perhaps even on the differences between individual learners. Some need more teaching than others, whereas some might only need instructing.

The rest four of the participants view themselves as both the instructor and the teacher equally. They aim to find an intermediate model, in which one of the two is put on a pedestal depending on the situation. In teaching situations, they consider they are teachers, whereas in situations that stress upbringing and manners of the learners they stress the role of an instructor. It depends totally on the situation and the learner, whether they need more just guidance or actual teaching.

Example 48.

Aino: Kasvatuksellisissa asioissa ohjaaja, englannin opettamisessa opettaja. Ei ne keksi nuo pienet pöllöpäät omasta päästään jotain kielen rakennetta, kyllä se pitää niille opettaa.

*Aino: Instructor in educational matters, teacher when teaching English. Kids cannot come up with some structures of a language by themselves, it needs to be taught to them.*

As Aino points out, the young learners need teaching in addition to instructing. They cannot learn any complicated rules of a language, for example, by themselves, but they need actual teaching. It might have to do with the subject being taught, however. Teaching languages might need more lecturing and teaching in a conventional way, whereas some other subjects might not need that much lecturing. It can be one reason, why Ilona, a classroom teacher, stresses more the importance of an instructor than the English teachers.

It was also brought up that the role of the teacher is changing more and more towards instructor. This is because modern teaching stresses increasingly the role of the self-reliance of the learners and student-centered learning.

Example 49.

Marjatta: Tiedän, että virallinen näkemys menee yhä enemmän sinne ohjaajan suuntaan ja kyllä näen sen miksi, koska oppilaslähtöisyys ja oppilaan omatoimisuus sitä suuntaa ko-rostaa.

*Marjatta: I know that the official vision is increasingly going to the direction of an instructor, and I can see why, as student-centered learning and self-reliance of the students emphasizes it.*

This raises the question, whether it also means that teacher authority is decreasing at the same time as the role of the teacher is changing. It is very difficult to tell, as no unanimity was found in respect of the role of the teacher. Even though it is recognized that the role of the teacher is changing, the teachers also recognize authority within themselves. It could be said that authority is changing instead of decreasing, as we saw in the background chapter as well. Authority no longer means coercion or discipline, but rather it describes the relationship between teacher and learners. Also, authority does not necessarily come from leadership alone, as we have seen, but there are several factors interplaying constantly, such as the personality and appearance of the teacher.

#### **4.5.2 The teachers' abilities to find different teaching methods based on situation**

In this section I aim to discover how much the teachers' skills to find appropriate methods are linked to teacher authority. I find it relevant to briefly discuss it, as according to Määttä and Uusiautti (2012), this concept that they call pedagogical tact (see also Siljander 2002) is perhaps the most relevant thing when it comes to forming teacher authority, as it underlines the teacher's ability and desire to understand the learner and to balance between formal and informal authority in the most suitable manner.

Each of the participants recognize the need for varying teaching methods, but still four of them admit that they do not vary their methods greatly. Instead, they continue to use ways that they have noticed to work. Instead of changing their ways

constantly, they regard that building an atmosphere which supports learning is more important. Also, they state that they have the abilities and know-how to change methods based on the situation if needed, but it can be more difficult to accomplish in reality. Five of the participants view that lack of time is the main reason for not being able to change teaching methods. Only Elisabeth feels that she never has had issues with adequacy of time.

Example 50.

Elisabeth: Aina on ollut minulla aikaa. Se on vaan, että miten sen käytät. ... Minun mielestäni se, että opettaja sanoo, että ei ehdi kaikkia opettaa, niin menen taululle, laitan vaan X:ää sinne ja sitten sanon, että "Sinä, anna tulla. Mitä seuraavaksi tehdään?"

*Elisabeth: I have always had time. It is just that how you use it. ... In my opinion that a teacher says that there is not enough time to teach everyone, so I go to the blackboard and say that "You, c'mon. What do we do next?"*

It is still necessary to remark that the situation described by Elisabeth might not be possible in case of every school subject. In the example above she is speaking about teaching mathematics, which makes it possible for the teacher to be a marker or a scribe, in a manner of speaking. When teaching different subjects which need different teaching methods, lack of time might be a bigger problem, as it seems based on the interviews as well.

There are no indications which would prove that lack of time would affect teacher authority, however. It can be interpreted that whether a teacher has pedagogical tact does not mean the same thing than changing teaching methods constantly, but rather finding functional teaching methods even if there was not enough time or resources. In this sense, pedagogical tact in practice would mean the ability of teachers to construct an atmosphere which supports learning within the realms of possibility. There are always things that could be better, but the teachers need to be able to make the most of it. This would then reflect positively on teacher authority as well, as according to Määttä and Uusiautti (2012), teacher authority and pedagogical tact go hand in hand.

### 4.5.3 Use of humour in the classroom

The use of humour in the classroom shows a major difference between the different participant groups. The participants who have had the least teaching experience and who have had no formal teacher training, Ville and Olli, do not use humour a great deal in their teaching. They state that they are very cautious when it comes to it, as not all humour fits the classroom environment.

The other four participants all use humour to some extent, maybe because of self-confidence that has come with teaching experience. They do not seem to be that

cautious of learners misinterpreting their use of humour nor do they seem to take themselves so seriously. Still, they point out that the age of the learners makes a difference on what kind of humour can be utilized, as for instance very young learners do not understand sarcasm.

Example 51.

Marjatta: Kyllä käytän huumoria. Ja aina voi yrittää vaikka nauraa itselleen ja omalle keskenäisyydelleen, ja sinänsä antaa ymmärtää että kukaan ei ole täydellinen.

*Marjatta: Yes, I use humour. And you can always try to laugh at yourself and your own incompleteness, and therefore to give the impression that no one is perfect.*

The use of humour depends on the situation and the age of the learners. Even though the more experienced teachers seem to utilize humour more, they also pay attention to how and when it can be used. Still, it is generally recognized that having a twinkle in the corner of the eye is often beneficial and can make the teaching event more relaxed and comfortable for the learners.

#### 4.5.4 Classroom atmosphere

As discussed before, pedagogical tact can manifest itself in the classroom in several ways. Pedagogical tact, however, is also closely connected to what the classroom atmosphere is like. The learning environment should not be too official nor friendly, but instead a golden mean should be looked for (Määttä and Uusiautti 2012; Siljander 2002). The teachers' actions in the classroom therefore affect classroom atmosphere greatly.

Each of the participants stated that they aim for an encouraging and positive learning environment. They stated that if the learners feel safe, it enables learning. It is, therefore, a nucleus of learning.

Example 52.

Ilona: Jotta uskaltaa oppia, niin pitää olla turvallinen olo. Se ei ole vain, että opetussuunnitelmassa sanotaan, että pitää luoda turvallinen oppimisympäristö kaikille. ... Esimerkiksi niinkin pieni asia että kenenkään ei pidä kokea tulevansa naurunalaiseksi luokassa. Toiselle ei naureta. Kaikille mielipiteille pitää olla tilaa ja kaikille vastauksille, oikeille ja väärille, pitää olla tilaa luokassa.

*Ilona: So that one can learn, one must feel safe. It is not just that the curriculum says that it is needed to create a safe learning environment for everyone. ... For instance, a small thing such as no one should be ridiculed in the classroom. You do not laugh at others. There must be room for all opinions and answers, right and wrong, in the classroom.*

However, creating a safe learning environment sometimes poses challenges as well, especially if the teacher has little experience and there are challenging learners in the classroom.

Example 53.

Olli: Etenkin haastavampien nuorten kanssa toimiminen, siihen tarvitaan erityispedagogisia taitoja. Se on aika vaikeata. En ole perehtynyt niin paljon siihen, että millaisia erilaisia opetusmenetelmiä on olemassa, jos on huonompi keskittymiskyky.

*Olli: Especially working with more challenging young people requires special educational skills. It is quite difficult. I am not so familiar with different teaching methods if the learners have poor attention spans.*

It seems that more experienced teachers have more means and courage to create a positive learning environment, and to face difficult learners as well. It is quite evident from Marjatta's answer, for example. She says that personal feedback and being close to the individual learners with challenges is the key to creating a positive classroom environment. Experience affects authority in this regard. Experience creates authority via increased know-how and courage.

The challenging learning environment for the teacher is reflected in how he or she feels in the classroom. Professionalism in that respect is reflected in what it is like to be in the classroom. Professionalism and know-how create comfort. As seen in the previous example, Olli feels that he sometimes faces challenges when creating a positive learning environment. This is also why he stated that he feels comfortable in the classroom totally based on the group in question. If the group poses challenges for his pedagogical knowledge, it makes it more uncomfortable for him to be in the classroom. In this sense, teacher authority can be greatly affected by teacher training and experience. However, also Marjatta, a teacher with lots of teaching experience, feels that comfort in classroom has to do with the challenges that she meets in the classroom. Maybe experience and teacher training do not guarantee comfort in classroom. There are challenges that each teacher faces if they are doing their job well and they care about the learners.

Example 54.

Marjatta: Se "mukavuus"-sana on sellainen, että sen voi liittää paljolti siihen mitä luokassa tapahtuu, mikä on se haaste tai vaatimus tai tehtävä mikä minulle siinä tulee.

*Marjatta: The word "comfort" can be associated with what is going on in the classroom, what is the challenge or requirement or task that I have.*

It would be ideal, however, that the teacher feels comfortable in the classroom. Several participants stress that teacher comfort is also reflected in learners. Thus, teacher authority and professionalism are concretely reflected in the atmosphere of the classroom. Nonetheless, sometimes it is not that easy, as we have seen in this section. This leads us to discuss another possible difficulty for the teachers in terms of teacher authority, tension in the classroom.

#### 4.5.5 Tension in the classroom

According to Vermunt and Verloop (1999, cited in Määttä and Uusiautti 2012: 27), teachers should always aim for some tension, because challenges are needed for the learners to make progress. Five of the six participants agree to this view, even though it was also stressed that it is not good if there is too much challenge, as it can destroy the sense of self-efficacy. Still, it was stated that it is important for the teachers to know what is going on in the classroom in the sense that the teacher can recognize the level of the learners and whether some learners need more challenge or less challenge. As a starting point, many see the same level of challenge, but emphasize assigning more challenging tasks according to the situation. There is a consensus that a balance is needed. Sometimes the tasks and assignments should be more challenging, whereas sometimes easier tasks are needed for the self-efficacy of the learners.

This differentiation can also be subject-specific. It was brought up by Marjatta that many learners nowadays speak very good English, and motivation may decrease if the tasks are too easy. Therefore, there must be more challenge for some learners. However, it was said by Elisabeth that in other subjects, such as mathematics, one goes according to the book. Teachers need to adapt based on the subject being taught. It also has to do with teacher authority, as the methods are very different in different subjects. This can then, for instance, affect the attitudes in the classroom.

Ilona is the one participant, whose views are not in line with Vermunt and Verloop's (1999, cited in Määttä and Uusiautti 2012: 27) view about necessary tension. She notes that too much challenge can be a disadvantage, but she may have understood challenging atmosphere to mean the same as competitive atmosphere, a search for a challenge. In this way her view has to do with destructive tension rather as constructive tension that the other participants were describing.

Example 55.

Ilona: Se (haastavuustaso) voi olla haitta. Jos tulee liian kilpaileva ilmapiiri luokassa, että haetaan koko ajan haastetta, mutta se riippuu siitä, miten me ajattelemme haastavuustason.

*Ilona: It (the level of challenge) can be a disadvantage. If the atmosphere in the classroom becomes too competitive, so that challenge is constantly being sought, but it depends on how we define the level of challenge.*

Also, the word tension is experienced as a negative word by one of the participants. Aino feels that tension has to do with an insecure feeling. In this sense, the word *tension* is experienced to represent destructive tension rather than constructive tension. It is a difficult matter. It seems quite evident that some tension is needed in the classroom, but still, only the word *tension* can be seen as negative. Yet, it is a constant struggle for teachers to aim for the best of each learner, and sometimes a certain level

of tension is needed. It raises the question whether it justifies the teachers to make the learners aim higher than they feel comfortable with.

According to Puolimatka (1997), common understanding is needed when it comes to this. The learners need to understand that the teacher aims for the best of them, while the teacher is also doing his/her best. This makes learning meaningful, as there is no coercion or negative feelings. Thus, a teacher should always aim for a positive classroom environment.

#### **4.5.6 Summary**

Even though there are various ways a teacher can act in a classroom, the teachers' actions do not seem to be directly connected to teacher authority. The teachers that were interviewed use very different teaching methods, but still, they all feel that they manage well. They also recognize their own authority within themselves, despite the way they implement pedagogical tact in the classroom. Also, they recognize whether their role in the classroom is more of a teacher or an instructor which can indicate that they consciously choose the way they implement pedagogical tact.

It could also be argued that if the teachers can teach as themselves, which was discussed under Section 4.4.6, there can be various teaching methods utilized, which will work well as long as the teachers have the courage to be themselves in the classroom. The teachers that were interviewed use very different teaching methods but still they all have found a way of teaching that works for them and which gives palpable learning experiences for their learners.

The small role of teachers' actions when it comes to teacher authority is interesting, as it can be argued that the teachers' actions are also closely connected to phenomena such as situational awareness and pedagogical love that were discussed in the previous sections. It appears, however, that teacher authority is more closely connected to the personality and charisma of the teacher, and the interaction between the teacher and the learners, i.e., how their relationship is like. I will discuss teacher-learner relationship more profoundly in the following section.

### **4.6 Teacher-learner relationship**

In this section I will discuss teacher-learner relationship and teacher attitudes in the classroom. I will take a look at how the participants feel they can adapt to the needs of different learner groups and individual learners. Finally, I will examine how do teachers realize the potential of learners and how do they help them to reach their individual goals.



With the help of the findings related to these questions, this section aims to answer the fourth research question. Teacher-learner relationship is a very important aspect of teacher authority, as it shows to what extent teachers stress pedagogical love and a stricter attitude. It also shows whether teachers have situational awareness and flexibility that, as seen in Figure 2, is closely connected to pedagogical tact and therefore also to teacher authority.

#### 4.6.1 Teacher attitudes and adaptation to learner needs

Motivating and encouraging learners is considered as one of the most important parts of the teacher-learner relationship. Four of the participants think that motivating the learners is what all learning is based on, and that it is the most crucial part of the profession of a teacher. Therefore, they all listed concrete ways they can motivate the learners, such as the following comment by Elisabeth.

Example 56.

Elisabeth: Kiitä, komenna... pitäähän joskus komentaa, mutta minun komentamiseni on hellää. Siinäkin on aina rakkaus. Vaikka komennan, niin minä sen rakkaudella teen. Ja sitten juuri tämä kannusta, kannusta kannustamisen jälkeenkin. Kukaan ei koskaan putoa kelkasta sen jälkeen, että on epäonnistunut. ... Ja kertomukset. Pienillehän on kertomukset tärkeitä.

*Elisabeth: Thank the learners, command... sometimes one has to command, but my command is tender. There is always love in that too. Even if I command, I do it with love. And then encouraging the learners, encourage even after encouragement. No one will ever fall behind after failing. ... And stories. After all, stories are important to the little ones.*

Even though four participants think that motivating the learners is the key to the profession, still, interestingly, two of the participants, Ville and Olli, do not regard intrinsic motivation that important, or at least it is not something they feel they can affect. It is interesting, as they are the two participants who have not had any formal teacher training. Maybe it is the training or the experience which explains that the four other participants think so differently about motivating learners.

Example 57.

Ville: Ei välttämättä ole lähtökohta kuitenkaan se, että opettajan on jatkuvasti motivoitava oppilasta uudelleen ja uudelleen, koska se on ehkä kotopuolen tehtävä, että peruskoulutus on käytävä läpi.

*Ville: It is not necessarily the starting point that the teacher needs to constantly motivate the learners repeatedly, as it is perhaps a task that is done at home that basic school must be completed.*

Example 58.

Olli: Ja ulkoinen motivaatio. Puhun kokeista. Sisäiseen motivaatioon on vaikea puuttua, että kerta kaikkiaan, jos se oppilas ei halua kehittää itseään niin koen että siihen on yksittäisessä opetustapahtumassa vaikea puuttua.

*Olli: And extrinsic motivation. I am talking about exams. It is difficult to intervene intrinsic motivation if the learners do not simply want to develop themselves, I feel that it is difficult to address in a single teaching event.*

Extrinsic motivation is considered more important than intrinsic motivation in the example above. Sometimes it can be difficult to motivate the learners, unless there are some extrinsic, external ways such as exams that, in a manner of speaking, force the learners to learn. Still, four of the participants disagree with the importance of extrinsic motivation, and stress that intrinsic motivation is necessary, even if it might be difficult to achieve sometimes.

It can also be difficult to adapt to the needs of the group. It is not enough that the teacher is active, but it is also expected from the group. This is what can make it challenging. It was brought up in several of the interviews that the learners need to be active and to openly approach the teacher and tell their thoughts about which things they find difficult. There needs to be interaction with the learners both ways. Therefore, adapting to the needs of the group has to do a lot with the group in question, as each group requires its own approach, and thus interaction is central. Situational awareness is needed from the teachers.

Example 59.

*Ilona: Jos kävelen luokkaan ja opetan asian niin kuin olen 20 vuotta opettanut asian huomioimatta yhtään, kenelle sitä asiaa opetan, niin tilanne on huono. Se on vuorovaikutusta ja myös ryhmän tarpeiden näkemistä.*

*Ilona: If I walk to the classroom and teach the matter the same way I have done it for 20 years without paying any attention to whom I am teaching, it is a bad situation. It is all about interaction and realizing the needs of the group.*

Teachers need to get to know the group and the individual learners in it so that they can understand which way to act in each situation. It was also brought up that it can be difficult to adapt to the needs of the group because there are several levels of learners in the class. Therefore, the teacher needs to constantly pay attention to the different learners and to be able to adapt based on them. Also, it is not enough that it is recognized, the teacher needs to concretely react to it, also for the relationship between the teacher and the learner to get stronger. Therefore, it can be argued that in some ways the role of the teacher is even greater than that of the learner in this regard. Still, in any relationship there is always two members. The learners need to be open and receptive as well.

As we have noticed, teacher-learner relationship stresses interaction between them. Therefore, the attitudes the teachers have towards the learners are important as well, so that the relationship can work well and there will be no conflicts. The participants all say that they are very unbiased and treat everyone equally as persons. Still, they treat every learner a bit differently so that they can help every learner

individually the best they can. Each of them stresses the importance of targeted support and attention, giving more challenge or more time based on the level of the learners. However, Olli feels that there is simply not enough time and resources to contribute to an individual learner, especially to the learners who do not need much individualized help, i.e., the best students in the class. This, again, may have to do with the teaching experience. It appears that the teachers who have been working for several years do not have any major issues with supporting individual learners.

#### 4.6.2 Potential of learners and their individual goals

Supporting individual learners appears to be something that the participants are very familiar with and have no issues with, for the most part. Still, when it comes to realizing the potential of individual learners, it can be very difficult. None of the participants think that it is easy, even though it was stated that in the most talented learners it is easier to realize. Still, it can be somewhat difficult if the talented learners are shy and quiet, and thus do not show their skills, and it is a new group for the teacher.

It was also said that to some extent it is a matter of faith. So that the potential is visible, it is necessary that the learners believe in themselves, and it is the teacher's job to help the learners to believe in themselves. It is something that all the participants aim for, but in reality, it is very challenging. The most prominent view is brought up by Marjatta in the following statement.

Example 60.

Marjatta: Tuskin joka tilanteessa pystyy oikeasti 20 oppilaan ryhmässä jokaisen potentiaalihin huomioimaan. Ei siihen kerta kaikkiaan riitä yhden aikuisen huomiokyky ja kyky reagoida.

*Marjatta: It is unlikely that in every situation one can realize the potential of everyone in a group of 20 learners. One adult simply cannot have enough attention and responsiveness.*

Constant collection of data in the classroom and following the progress of each learner individually are some concrete ideas that most of the participants have when it comes to realizing the potential of the learners. Still, it is a very difficult task for the teacher, if not impossible, to keep up with every learner. It is the same with taking individual goals of the learners into account. It is very difficult in a big group to pay attention to everyone, as there are limited time and resources. Also, most of the participants teach grades 1-6, and many learners of this age do not still have any big future goals or plans. The goals of an elementary school student are in the near future. There are three approaches that the participants have when it comes to taking individual goals of young learners into account.

The first approach is to make sure that the learners do their best already as very young, so they can choose what they want to do when they know it. As very young

learners do not have clear individual goals for the future, more attention should be paid on being engaged in learning now. The basis for this approach is, therefore, to make sure that the learners get all the necessary basic knowledge to start building their professionalism in the future.

The second approach is to teach the children to set goals for themselves. Three of the participants stated that children do not know how to set goals for themselves, and therefore it was seen important that they learn to think what their subject-specific goals might be. In order to realize the individual goals of the learners, there need to be some goals in the first place. That way, this approach goes back to square one.

The third approach is to settle for following the curriculum and making sure that the most central things can be taught for every learner. Even though it would be ideal to pay attention to every learner and their goals, sometimes it is more difficult to do than say.

What is interesting, is that the views differ greatly even when it comes to taking the goals of older learners into account, i.e., learners that already have some goals set for themselves for the future. While some participants stress inclusion, some see differentiation as very important. It is therefore impossible to conclude whether the way teachers treat the goals of the learners would affect teacher authority.

Instead, I would argue that even if it is not always possible to take the individual goals of the learners into account, it is more important that the teachers do the best they can in any situation. It appears that all the participants genuinely care about the learners, which, I believe, the learners will also notice and that shows positively in their authority. Even if the individual goals of the learners are not always met, still in the classroom the aim is to encourage learner participation as much as possible. The participants said that small things, such as encouraging good learner behaviour and manners, letting the learners do everything they can themselves, or using group exercises which force every learner to participate, will encourage students to participate. These methods stress interaction more than teacher control or coercion, which can mean that interaction is what is central, and not necessarily how much the teacher aims to realize individual goals or potential of the learners.

### **4.6.3 Summary**

In this section, teacher-learner relationship was discussed, as it is a central aspect of building teacher authority, and as it connects the concepts of *pedagogical tact* and *teacher authority*. Understanding teacher-learner relationship is also important when it comes to recognizing the most useful role of the teacher in the classroom that is both authoritative and takes the goals of the learners into account.

Adapting to the needs of different learner groups turned out to be very difficult for each of the participants. Intrinsic motivation is considered central, even though its

importance seems to be connected to teaching experience. Also, it was stressed that every group needs a unique approach, which can make it difficult to adapt to their needs. The most central factor appears to be interaction, however. It is stressed that both the teacher and the learners need to actively aim for the best learning outcomes and to work together to achieve it. Still, the role of the teacher is considered extremely important. He/she needs to give constant attention and targeted support for the learners.

Realizing learner potential is considered very difficult as well. In large groups it can be challenging to pay attention for every learner, for example due to little time and resources available. Therefore, in order to secure learning and learners meeting their goals, teachers should support learner participation as much as they can.

## **4.7 Teacher training explaining different views on authority**

This section will take a look at whether the differences in teacher training between English subject teachers and classroom teachers can explain the different ways the participants view teacher authority and how they act in the classroom. Also, I will discuss whether the participants with no teacher training view authority differently than the participants who have had teacher training.

### **4.7.1 Differences between classroom teachers and English teachers regarding their views on teacher authority**

There do not seem to be any visible differences between the views of English teachers and classroom teachers when it comes to teacher authority. Neither there seems to be any differences in the teacher training they had when it comes to it. None of the participants remember that teacher authority was discussed a lot during it, rather it was touched upon in some courses. Each of the participants who have had teacher training said, however, that it has been such a long time since their training that they do not remember exactly how much it was discussed. It can also explain why they think it was not discussed a lot.

Anyway, I believe that if teacher authority was something that was considered important in their training, they would remember at least something regarding it. Some of the participants remember, however, that discipline and classroom management was talked about. Maybe to some extent it covers teacher authority as well. As discussed in the background section, according to some scholars, teacher authority has to do with teacher control and discipline, even though in modern research teacher authority is more closely connected to interaction between the teacher and the learners.

Rather than verbally discussing teacher authority in any of their university classes, the participants feel that they have learned about teacher authority by observing how other teachers act in the classroom. This seems to be the case for both the classroom teachers and English teachers. They had to find their own way by following the models of others. No actual guidance was given and there was no talk of authority.

Example 61.

Aino: Kun sai nähdä useamman ohjaavan opettajan tunteja, sai sen mallin, niin ehkä rupesi miettimään sitä, että miksi tämä tapahtuma näyttää näin helpolta hänellä, tai miksi oppilaat eivät tykkää hänestä. ... Minä mietin, että pystyykö sitä (auktoriteettia) opettamaan.

*Aino: As I got to see lessons of several supervising teachers, I got a model for it, and maybe started to think that why does this event look so easy for him/her or why the students do not like him/her. ... I wonder if one can teach it (authority).*

Aino raises an interesting point in the example above. Maybe teacher authority was not discussed a lot in teacher training because it cannot be taught. As we saw in the previous sections of Chapter 4 of the present study, it seems that many of the participants base their authority on their personality. Ilona, for instance, sees that teacher authority is greatly based on her personality, and she feels that she never has had any issues with teacher authority, as it is a part of her. She recognizes, however, that if she had some issues with authority, it would have been necessary to discuss it more in the training. Aino also feels that it could have been useful to talk about it more, at least to the extent that it would have been discussed what makes a good teacher and why learners do not like some teachers.

It is also possible that teacher authority is not considered important in teacher training because it is misunderstood. Marjatta points out that the fact she never comes across the term *teacher authority* might explain it. As being an instructor is being considered more important as teaching in a traditional sense nowadays, teacher authority is not discussed. This can mean that teacher authority is vastly considered to mean something across the lines of discipline or coercion. Maybe it is the concept, which is alienating, and not necessarily the interactive nature of teacher authority that the modern scholars think it means. Teacher authority can indeed be misunderstood in a large scale, just like Pace and Hemmings (2007) claim.

Example 62.

Marjatta: Minusta tuntuu, että tässä (auktoriteetti) käsitteessä on jo yksi avain. Minä en törmää itse tähän käsitteeseen oikeastaan. ... Mielestäni siitä miten siihen nykyään suhtaudutaan, jotakin kertoo se, että opettajuuden käsite on mennyt opettajuudesta ohjaajuuteen.

*Marjatta: It seems to me that this concept (authority) has the key to it. I do not come across this concept at all really. ... I think that the fact that the concept of teachership has moved from teaching to instructing explains how it is perceived today.*

To sum up this section, there are no clear differences between the classroom teachers and English teachers when it comes to how they think teacher training has prepared them to be authoritative figures in the classroom. It seems that the differences in their views are rather explained by differences between different personalities. It also appears that teacher authority has not been discussed a lot during their teacher training, which contradicts the course descriptions I presented in Section 2.6. It is possible, however, that in the time the participants had their training, teacher authority was not seen that relevant topic of discussion. Still, it is interesting, as neither do I remember that teacher authority was being talked about, and it has only been one year since my teacher training. Maybe it is because the learning goals do not meet reality.

#### **4.7.2 The participants with no teacher training**

Even though there seems to be no differences between classroom teacher training and English (subject) teacher training when it comes to building teacher authority, the participants with no teacher training appear to see teacher authority in a slightly different light than those who have had training. This becomes most apparent in three ways, as seen in the previous sections.

First, the participants with no teacher training, Ville and Olli, see friendliness as something to aim for. Some of the other participants stated that friendliness can be a good aid, however, but it not something that should be regarded very important. It is a tool rather than a method. The relationship between the teacher and the learners is more asymmetric according to the participants who have had teacher training, and it is rather based on teacher status and professionalism.

Second, the role of motivation is seen differently by those with training and those with no training. Whereas Ville and Olli do not think intrinsic motivation is that important, and that extrinsic motivation might be even more important than it, it is the opposite for the participants who have had training.

Third, there are differences in the use of humour. The participants with no training do not regard humour as something that is important for the teachers. It might be that they are more cautious, as they do not have that much teaching experience. It might be more difficult to tell when it is appropriate to use humour, and to what extent it can be utilized.

Nonetheless, it is difficult to say whether these observations are explained by the fact that they have had no teacher training or by their limited experience. Also, as I interviewed only two persons from each participant group, the differences might be

explained by individual differences rather than differences explained by training they have had. There might be some other differences as well, or it can be that by interviewing different people, these differences might now even show up. However, the results are indicative and provide a basis for future research on the subject.

Still, the interviews were comprehensive, and these three differences that were found clearly emerged from the data. Therefore, I argue that experience and education affect teacher authority. It indeed seems that the participants who have had teacher training view authority differently than those who have had no teacher training.



## 5 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The present study aimed to find personalized and detailed views of teacher authority by interviewing six Finnish basic school teachers, two of which were English teachers, two were classroom teachers, and two had some teaching experience with no teacher training. It aimed to complement previous studies which either were very abstract or were based on questionnaires. Especially the present study relates to Ojala et al.'s (2019) study. They can be regarded as complementary studies, that can be utilized to get a comprehensive picture about teacher authority. This is why after discussing the research questions of the present study I will also briefly compare the findings between their study and the present study.

The research was conducted to understand how teacher authority is understood, what does it mean in practice, and how the conceptions of teachers affect how it perceived. Another reason was to find out where teacher authority comes from. Traditionally teacher authority has meant factors that stress the power of the teacher over the learners, and the learners are expected to respect it. In modern research interaction between the teacher and the learner is considered the most important factor when it comes to teacher authority. The present study aimed to discover whether the concept of teacher authority still means teacher discipline and power, and whether this is also true regarding the actions of teachers.

The present study aimed to discover the origins of teacher authority, the connection between the personality and the actions of teachers and teacher authority, and how teacher-learner relationships are like. These questions were intended to give a comprehensive picture about teacher authority and how it is perceived.

The research method used was content analysis, in which theory had a deductive role. This is also why the results are interpretative, as it often is in qualitative research.

## 5.1 The present study

The first research question about the origins of teacher authority divided the views of the participants greatly. According to them teacher authority either derives from a close and loving teacher-learner relationship, the responsibility that lies within the profession, or that teacher authority is a trait or a quality that teachers either have or do not have. It seemed that the participants shared the latest view at least to some extent, as none of them argued that teacher authority would be easy to learn. It is rather something that teachers possess naturally, and their personality has a lot to do with it. It does not mean, however, that it would be impossible to learn to be an authoritative figure in the classroom. Some teachers need to work more with it and consciously practice it.

Interestingly, the power of the teacher was not being emphasized when it comes to origins of authority, even though in a lot of previous research it has been considered important. This also gives the impression that the concept of authority is indeed changing. Still, even though power in terms of coercion was not considered to have to do with teacher authority, teachers have some power that stems from leadership of the class and the responsibility that it brings. However, in this sense power is more closely connected with interaction than coercion. It is also important to realize, that the present study focused on Finnish basic education, and in different countries and cultures the role of power when it comes to teacher authority might be different.

The second research question about how the participants think that the teacher's personal traits and pedagogical love are connected to teacher authority also provided a variety of different views and responses. There seems to be an endless number of different kinds of authorities, as many as there are different personalities in the world. It appeared that each participant teaches in their own way, and views authority from their own perspective. Even though some appear to base their authority more on their professionalism and expert subject knowledge, still they also act naturally in the classroom, and they have their own way of being and teaching.

Even the personality of the teacher has a lot to do with how teacher authority is formed, interestingly, teacher charisma was not something that was seen important when it comes to it. However, it is possible that this is because it is very difficult to realize charisma within oneself, as many of the participants remembered charismatic teachers from when they were young and connected their charisma to their authority. Therefore, I would argue that charisma can be important and useful, but not totally necessary for the teachers in terms of teacher authority. Still the role of it should not be downplayed. As I said, there are an endless number of different kinds of authorities, and for some teachers their charisma can be the most important factor when it comes to it.

The appearance of the teacher, just like charisma that is closely connected to it, was not considered that important by the participants. Even though some saw that appearance has an impact on their authority, there was no such consensus. Still, it was agreed on that for some age groups appearance might be more important than for others.

The third research question regarding teachers' actions in the classroom and how they affect teacher authority, classroom atmosphere and learner participation also proved interesting answers. Teachers' actions were not considered that important when it comes to teacher authority when compared to teacher-learner relationship or the personality of the teacher. Despite the multiplicity of ways that a teacher can act in a classroom setting, the actions do not seem to be directly connected to teacher authority, at least according to the participants. The participants all taught in different ways and there was no apparent consistency between their teaching methods and their authority. I would argue that it is more important if the teachers teach as themselves. On the basis of the interviews, it seems that the teachers who have found the courage to be themselves in the classroom and ways of teaching that work for them, it is also visible positively in the learning outcomes.

When it comes to classroom atmosphere, an encouraging and warm environment was seen as the goal by each of the participants. Classroom atmosphere is often considered a key element in building teacher authority (e.g. Cooper and Olsen 2014; Puolimatka 1997; Määttä and Uusiautti 2012). Still, it can be difficult to achieve sometimes. Especially for the participants with little teaching experience, there seemed to be fewer concrete ways to achieve it. In that sense professionalism and know-how brought by experience help to create comfort and a positive learning atmosphere. Also, it is not just important that the learners feel well in the classroom, as the mood and comfort of the teacher is reflected in learners as well.

There is always tension in the classroom. It can either be constructive or destructive (Määttä and Uusiautti 2012). Constructive tension is often considered crucial when it comes to building teacher authority (Määttä and Uusiautti 2012: 27). The importance of constructive tension was also stressed in the interviews, as challenges are needed in order for the learners to develop and adapt to different kinds of environments. However, it was also stated that too much challenge for the learners is not good as it can ruin the feeling of self-efficacy.

Puolimatka's (1997) view of common understanding becomes the key in this regard. If the learners understand that the endeavors of the teacher are for the best of them, and the teacher also is open and vocalizes the goals and intentions, it will lead to a positive learning environment. Learning should always be meaningful. Also, a teacher alone cannot affect authority. In a classroom there are always teacher and learners, and it is a matter of interaction, which needs common understanding that

Puolimatka (1997) is stressing. It seems that teachers' actions in the classroom are not that important when it comes to teacher authority, but rather teacher-learner relationship should be discussed.

The fourth and final research question had to do with exactly that, teacher-learner relationship. Based by the interviews it appears that there are several ways to form the relationship, and that has a lot to do with the experience or the training of the teachers. The teachers with no training emphasized friendliness as the linchpin of the relationship, whereas this view was opposed by the other participants. Even though they also considered friendliness important in some contexts, they think that teacher authority should not be based on it. Rather they aim to find an environment which is not too official nor friendly, but somewhere in between. This view is in accordance with the concept of pedagogical tact (see Määttä and Uusiautti 2012; Siljander 2002), which Määttä and Uusiautti (2012) consider to be the most important factor when it comes to teacher authority and its relation to pedagogical love.

Pedagogical tact also has to do with the skill to adapt to different learner groups. This is something that was considered difficult no matter the training or teaching experience. As every group needs a unique approach, the teachers need to constantly be aware of the needs of the learners, which can be a challenge. The most central factor in this regard also seems to be the interactive relationship between the teacher and the learners. Even though the role of the teacher is great, as he/she needs to constantly pay attention to the learners and their needs and challenges, the learners cannot be passive neither. The participants seemed to agree that the whole class needs to work together to achieve maximum results. Maybe this is why adapting to the different learner groups was seen so difficult. It is difficult to affect other people and impossible to make them act in a way that would be beneficial for the whole classroom. Also, I think, as it was considered difficult by every participant, it would be an important matter to discuss more in teacher training, or even in everyday conversations between teachers. All the participants seemed to have a different approach when it comes to adapting to different learner groups, and the different views could help other teachers and complement their own views.

In addition to the personality of the teacher and teacher-learner relationship, teacher authority arises from teacher status to a great extent, although the term *authority* was considered alienating or inappropriate. For some teachers, authority (as a concept) still appears to mean the power of the teacher rather than interaction. Maybe the concept is not suitable. Perhaps a modern counterpart would be needed that would focus more on teacher-learner interaction. On the other hand, I do not know if there is a need for it. It seems that each teacher teaches in their own way that they have found to work for them. All the interviewees feel that they are mostly themselves in the classroom, and that is important to them. Although none of the interviewees remembered

that authority was being discussed during their teacher training, they all felt that they have authority, at least to some degree, and teaching experience has given them tools to work in a classroom in a way that maximizes learning outcomes. However, it is difficult to say whether teaching experience, individual differences or (lack of) training is more important when it comes to it.

In addition to these four research questions, the present study aimed to find out whether there are differences between the three participant groups when it comes to their perceptions of teacher authority. The type of teacher training did not seem to affect the perceptions at all, at least in the case of the participants. Instead, I believe that only individual differences and different ways to understand authority and to act in a classroom explain the differences found. Also, none of the participants with teacher training, either classroom teacher training or subject teacher training, remembered that authority was discussed during their training. Consequently, there are no differences in that sense either. It is possible that if more people were interviewed, some consistency would have been found, however.

The participants who had no teacher training showed clear differences in their perceptions of teacher authority when compared to those participants with training. They stressed friendliness, avoided too much humour in the classroom, and saw extrinsic motivation more important than intrinsic motivation. The participants with training disagreed quite strongly with these three views. Again, it is possible that it is explained by the small number of participants, but it is interesting and indicative that the differences found were that intense.

To sum up the previous paragraphs in this chapter, the study managed to answer the research questions very well. Even though there were only six interviews, the nature of the interview questions, I believe, allowed for a variety of different responses, and each participant could answer them from his/her own perspective. The interview questions were very successful, and they made it possible to understand every participant as an individual and to focus on what they considered important. Even though in some interviews the questions seemed quite repetitive, they made it possible for the participants to further explain their views. In some interviews the questions did not feel repetitive at all. I think it also tells that they did not lead the interviews to any predetermined direction, but the interviewees could approach the theme from their own point of view. The interview questions can be found in the appendix.

## **5.2 Earlier research**

In this section I will compare my findings to Ojala et al.'s (2019) findings from their questionnaire. As I said, the present study can be seen as a complementary study

to theirs, as it is interested in similar themes, and aims to give more detailed answers and to check the accuracy of their findings. These two studies also complement each other as their study was focused on learners, while the present study is interested in the detailed views of teacher authority as expressed by teachers themselves.

The first finding Ojala et al. (2019) had was that learners view authority as something fair and respectable rather than as a way of coercion. The teachers also think that coercion should be avoided, and their behaviour in the classroom is based on mutual respect with the learners. Friendliness and trustworthiness were stressed by them, and mutual appreciation with the learners is regarded important. However, for some participants authority as a concept still appears to mean the power of the teacher rather than interaction.

The second finding Ojala et al. (2019) had was that the factors that shape teacher authority have to do with maintaining peace in classroom, expertise of the teachers, and learners' will to avoid punishments. Learners want to learn, and it is important when forming teacher authority. As I did not study learners per se, I only can discuss teacher expertise. In this sense the present study is in line with Ojala et al.'s (2019) study. Expertise is very important. The teacher is the only adult in the classroom and has knowledge that the learners do not possess. Therefore, there is an asymmetric relationship with the learners. It is the teachers' job to make sure that the learners want to learn. The atmosphere in the classroom should not be scary but encouraging instead. Pedagogical love is very important in this sense.

The third finding Ojala et al. (2019) had was that learners expect discipline and good classroom management skills from the teacher. As the present study is not interested in the views of the learners, it is difficult to profoundly compare my findings to it. However, it does seem that a good teacher is appreciated and held in high regard. In some of the interviews it was stated that a good teacher is valued a lot, not the one who is fun and nice. Also, as it seems that all the participants manage well in classroom and they all seem to have a clear vision of their own authority and the way they act in the classroom, it seems that they are all responsible and good teachers. Thus, it does seem that good classroom management skills are appreciated. Good management brings out good outcomes.

The final and fourth finding Ojala et al. (2019) had was that learners obey a nice and kind teacher, and thus teachers should teach as themselves. They claim that the most important thing in developing teacher authority is to get to know oneself and to find ways of teaching that are personalized. According to the present study it seems to be important as well. Teachers seem to base their teaching on their personalities. They have the courage to be themselves in the classroom, at least to some extent.

Consequently, the present study seems to confirm Ojala et al.'s (2019) findings. Even though the focuses were different, either learners or teachers, the results are very

similar. The only small difference seems to be that some teachers still think that authority as a concept means discipline and power of the teacher, even though their actions in the classroom stress interaction and mutual respect.

In the introduction I stated that a big reason for why I decided to write my thesis about teacher authority is because of personal reasons. I wondered why I managed well in my teacher training, even though I do not consider myself a strong authoritative figure in traditional sense. I speculated that perhaps it is because I was always myself in the classroom and did the teaching my way. I think Ojala et al.'s (2019) findings with the findings of the present study give a good answer to it. It does indeed seem that authority is much more than just teacher's actions. The teacher is not alone in the classroom, and it is just the interaction that is important. A nice and caring teacher is respected, the one who has pedagogical tact and situational awareness, and respects the learners. Teachers' actions in the classroom are reflected in the way the learners act towards the teacher.

### **5.3 Limitations, implications, and a definition**

The study is very timely, as it turned out that the concept of teacher authority is understood in so many ways that it is even difficult to give a clear definition. Whereas authority is often still equated with the old-fashioned view that is closely connected with discipline and coercion, interaction and mutual appreciation between teacher and the learners are also stressed. It is understood that there are several different kinds of authorities, as the personality of the teacher is closely connected to it. For example, some have authority because of their charisma, and some manage even with no clear charisma. Some base authority more on their professionalism, while some think that trustworthiness or friendliness are more relevant.

My goal was to define teacher authority, but I think it is an impossible task. There are an endless number of factors that affect it. For example, an authoritative and respected teacher might not have any authority with another learner group, or a friendly approach might work with some groups but not with some other groups. If I had to give a definition based on the findings, I would state it like this:

Teacher authority is leadership that shows in teacher-learner interaction when the needs and respect of the learners and the teacher meet.

Again, this definition is very simplified, and it does not describe the whole image. It is impossible to define teacher authority in one sentence. It is like telling how a chainsaw air filter works by using just one sentence. A whole manual is needed for that. Also, teacher authority means very different things for every teacher, as we saw

from the interviews. While the concept may not be that clear, it does not affect the work of teachers as long as they strive for the best of the learners and do their work with a certain level of professionalism.

As the present study is quite small-scale, with merely six interviews, it was challenging to find consistencies between the three participant groups. I believe, if I could have interviewed more people, more consistencies could have been found. Within the limits of the master's thesis, it was not possible. However, the present study complements Ojala et al.'s (2019) study, and together they give a broader perspective on teacher authority.

Also, the generalizability of the results is a limitation. With different participants there might have been different results. And it most likely would have been the case, as the present study has shown that teacher authority is largely explained by individual differences, different personalities, rather than factors that have to do with training for instance.

Nonetheless, the results are indicative and show that there is a need for future research on the subject. For instance, there is a need for more extensive research on the relationship between differences in education and the formation, maintenance, and identification of authority. Also, as teacher authority appears to be more closely connected with the personality of the teacher and the interaction in the classroom than teachers' concrete actions in the classroom, perhaps it would be useful to study this further. Based on the present study it is not that clear how do the teachers' actions affect teacher authority and teacher-learner relationship. All the teachers that took part in the study seemed to teach in very different and unique ways. Perhaps there would be some generalizable features or patterns of action that would contribute to the formation of authority. It would also be good to investigate whether it is really the case that authority is not taught in any way in teacher training, even though it is claimed to.



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## APPENDIX

Kuinka kauan olet toiminut opettajana?

### **MÄÄRITELMÄ**

Miten itse määrittelisit opettajan auktoriteetin? Mitä itse ajattelet sen tarkoittavan omalla kohdallasi?

### **ALKUPERÄ**

Mistä ajattelet, että opettajan auktoriteettisi on peräisin?

Oletko ollut tilanteessa, jossa olet kokenut, ettei sinulla ole auktoriteettia? Mistä luulet, että tällainen tilanne on syntynyt? Miten se on näkynyt omassa toiminnassasi?

Onko mielestäsi opettajan auktoriteetin muodostumisessa keskeisimmässä osassa opettaja vai oppilas?

Miten pyrit takaamaan, että oppilaat saavat onnistumisen kokemuksia?

Mikä on mielestäsi ryhmän rooli auktoriteetin muodostumisen kannalta?

### **OPETTAJAN LUONNE JA PEDAGOGINEN RAKKAUS**

Millainen merkitys on ensikohtaamisella auktoriteetin muodostumisen kannalta?

Onko mielestäsi opettajan ulkoisella olemuksella merkitystä auktoriteetin kannalta? Miksi?

Uskotko, että opettajan karismalla on vaikutus auktoriteetin muodostumiseen? Koetko itse, että omaat tietynlaista karismaa, joka auttaa auktoriteettisi muodostumisessa?

Missä määrin koet olevasi oma itsesi luokassa?

Miten kaverillisesti suhtaudut oppilaisiin? Missä määrin auktoriteettisi pohjautuu asian-tuntijätietoosi ja pedagogisiin taitoihisi?

Entä miten auktoriteettisi pohjautuu luonteeseesi?

Koetko asemasi opettajana oikeuttavan auktoriteettisi?

### **OPETTAJAN TOIMINTA LUOKKAHUONEESSA JA MITEN SE VAIKUTTAA OPETTAJAN AUKTORITEETTIIN, LUOKKAHUONEEN ILMAPIIRIIN JA OPPIJOIDEN OSALLISTUMISEEN**

#### **OPETTAJAN TOIMINTA**

Koetko olevasi enemmän ohjaaja vai opettaja? Miten tämä näkyy opetuksessasi?

Pyritkö aina löytämään erilaisia metodeja tilanteen mukaan? Onko tekijöitä, jotka estävät sen kuten ajan puute?

Pyritkö toiminnallasi motivoimaan ja kannustamaan oppilaita? Miten?

Käytätkö huumoria opetuksessasi? Riippuuko se tilanteesta?

#### **ILMAPIIRI**

Koetko olosi mukavaksi luokahuoneessa? Mitkä tekijät tähän vaikuttavat?

Mitä tulee luokkahuoneen ilmapiiriin, kuinka tärkeäksi näet, että se on rohkaiseva ja kannustava?

Pyritkö aina löytämään oppilaiden potentiaalin? Onko siihen aikaa ja resursseja?

Miten tärkeää on mielestäsi pitää yllä jonkinasteinen jännite/haastavuustaso luokkahuoneessa?

Onko hyvä, että opettaja pyrkii saamaan oppilaat pyrkimään korkeammalle kuin he kokevat mukavaksi?

Missä määrin annat haastavia tehtäviä oppilaille? Miksi? Millaisia? Nostatko ikinä rimaa oppilaille? Miksi, miten?

### **OSALLISTUMINEN**

Miten otat huomioon oppilaiden henkilökohtaisia tavoitteita? Onko se haastavaa, kun kaikilla oppilailla on jossain määrin erilaiset tavoitteet ja tulevaisuudensuunnitelmat?

Miten pyrit edistämään oppilaiden osallistumista?

### **OPETTAJAN JA OPPIJAN VÄLINEN SUHDE**

Onko mielestäsi helppoa vai haasteellista mukautua ryhmän tarpeisiin?

Suhtaudutko eri oppilaisiin eri tavalla heidän tarpeidensa tai muun syyn takia?

### **KOULUTUSTEN EROIHIN LIITTYEN**

Miten koet opintojesi valmistaneen sinua auktoriteettiseksi opettajaksi? Missä määrin koet, että auktoriteettia käsiteltiin opintojesi aikana? Käsiteltiinkö auktoriteettia riittävästi? Muistatko, miten se tuli opintojen aikana esiin?

Olisiko ollut hyödyllistä keskustella enemmän auktoriteetista koulutuksesi aikana? Vai olisiko se ollut vain puuduttavaa teoriaa, jota olisi ollut vaikea sisältää käytäntöön ilman kokemusta? Eli onko kokemus se merkittävin tekijä?