# Learners' perceptions of inclusion in an English language classroom

Bachelor's thesis

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**JYVÄSKYLÄN YLIOPISTO**

Tiivistelmä – Abstract

Tutkimuksen tarkoituksena on selvittää oppijoiden kokemuksia inkluusiosta englannin kielen luokkahuoneessa sellaisten ihmisten kohdalla, jotka eivät puhu ensimmäisenä kielenään suomea tai englantia. Oppijoiden kielirepertuaarin huomioimisella opetuksen yhteydessä on tärkeä rooli inkluusion kannalta, jonka vuoksi aiheen tutkiminen oppijoiden näkökulmasta on merkityksellistä.

Tutkimuksen aineisto kerättiin verkkokyselyn avulla, johon vastaaminen tehtiin anonyymisti. Vastauksia kyselyyn saatiin 13. Kysely itsessään koostui Likertin asteikolla mitattavista kysymyksistä sekä avoimista kysymyksistä. Aineistoa käsiteltiin laadullisia ja määrällisiä menetelmiä käyttäen.

Kyselyn tulokset antavat ymmärtää, että oppijoiden kielellisiä taustoja opettajan toimesta hyödynnetään vain osittain eikä esimerkiksi limittäiskieleilyä erityisesti tuettu osana opetusta. Vastausten perusteella voidaan tehdä myös johtopäätös, että suomen kielen osaamisella on edelleen huomattava vaikutus englannin kielen inklusiivisessa opetuksessa. Tämän tutkimuksen tulokset ovat myös linjassa aiempien aiheesta tehtyjen tutkimusten kanssa, joissa huomio keskittyy oppijoiden kokemuksiin siitä, että heidän kielellistä osaamistaan ei osata hyödyntää osana opetusta. Tulevaisuudessa aihetta ja siihen vaikuttavia tekijöitä voitaisiin vielä tutkia tarkemmin sekä opettajan että erityisesti oppijan näkökulmasta.

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# 1 Introduction

During the past decades, English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms have seen various changes in teaching practices in Finland. What is more, the number of non-native Finnish speakers have risen significantly (Pitkänen-Huhta et al. 2014), and English language classrooms no longer consist of one group of learners with homogenous lingual backgrounds. Previously these homogenous learner groups have consisted of either Finnish or Swedish speakers (Pitkänen-Huhta et al. 2014) due to their official status in Finland, but nowadays the scale of different lingual backgrounds found in an EFL classroom is much more diverse. Therefore, because of changes in Finnish learners' lingual repertoire and background, teaching must adapt to serve different kinds of learners by taking their personal lingual backgrounds into account.

The English language does not have an official status in Finland, but its teaching is embraced by referring to it as a lingua franca. Finland is, however, a multilingual country by constitution, and Finnish, Swedish and Sami languages are recognised as the nation's official languages. The National Agency for Education (2014) directs that teaching should include how things are expressed in other languages as well, not only in the medium of instruction, and different languages and cultures should be respected: that provides a solid platform to use learners' lingual backgrounds to achieve a more equal and inclusive classroom, where everybody's lingual backgrounds are being recognised and supported. Furthermore, an individual's feeling of inclusion can be increased if learners find their own languages useful in English language classrooms (Pitkänen-Huhta et al. 2014) and their lingual repertoire can be used to enhance fellow learner's learning experience (Alisaari et al. 2021).

Previously, the subject has been investigated mostly through the teacher's point of view and how they perceive using different lingual backgrounds to enrich their teaching (Alisaari et al. 2021, Pitkänen-Huhta and Mäntylä 2014). When it comes to learners' experiences and perceptions about language teaching, the gap in research is much wider. The study carried out by Pitkänen-Huhta and Mäntylä (2021) shows that almost all the interviewed teachers had issues dealing with multilingualism from a pedagogical point of view. For example, taking a more active stance regarding the matter in a classroom environment would require time to reflect their own pedagogical practices and curriculum and better resources to work with (Alisaari et al. 2021). Furthermore, many of the interviewed teachers implied that they have not given much thought for the subject consciously. This feeling of lacking pedagogical

resources and means to recognise and use lingual diversity during teaching can partially be explained through a study carried out by The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and discussed by Hawkins (2011) in her book *Social Justice Language Teacher Education*: most of the public school systems are underfunded and teachers are underpaid everywhere in the world, which contributes towards problems that can be found in multilingual language classrooms.

For the above-mentioned reasons, this study aims to shed some light on how learners perceive teaching practices and general classroom atmosphere in relation to inclusion, and whether the teacher's actions help to create a feeling of inclusion during EFL lessons in Finland among learners whose first language (L1) is not Finnish or English. This matter was researched by sending a questionnaire for learners that fall under the target group, in order to receive data that reflects the current situation in English language classrooms in Finland from a learner's point of view.

In this study, I discuss background theories, methods of analysis and data gathering and what kind of perceptions and experiences can be seen through the answers of this study's questionnaire. The study's questionnaire can be found from the appendix, in original Finnish and translated English version.

## 2 Background theory

In this section I will discuss theories and key concepts that are in the centre of my thesis. These include inclusion, translanguaging pedagogy in a classroom environment, classroom interaction and social justice. Being aware and understanding these concepts also helps to create a better image about the nature of the study and why this kind of research is relevant.

To elaborate the phenomenon further, another important aspect is that in Finnish EFL classrooms language learning happens mostly through learner's mother tongue. The study carried out by Illman and Pietilä (2018) shows that many language teachers teach their subject through Finnish, which leaves a gap in teaching practices when it comes to learners whose L1 is other than Finnish. The study also mentions that many multilingual learners use their L1 in order to learn other languages and teachers may face difficulties when trying to support them due to lack of knowledge about their L1.

### 1.1 Translanguaging pedagogy

Multilingualism is an umbrella term, which covers multiple different definitions about using multiple languages: as discussed by Aronin and Singleton (2012), defining multilingualism is not an easy task and scholars have very different opinions on what it means and covers. For example, some argue that multilingualism is if someone speaks and uses two different languages on native level; other scholars propose that to qualify as multilingual one should be able to for example order ice cream or read a single sentence in a different language than one's own home language. Therefore, a multilingual person could be anybody who uses other language(s) than one's own native language at any proficiency level.

Translanguaging is a term that falls under the umbrella term of multilingualism. Garcia (et al. 2016: 2) defines the term translanguaging as "The deployment of a speaker's full linguistic repertoire without regard for watchful adherence to the socially and politically defined boundaries of named languages", and it can be described as a form of bilingualism. In this study, the main aim is in the pedagogical aspect of translanguaging and how it can be seen in the classroom environment. Pedagogical translanguaging takes place, when teachers use translanguaging as a tool and teaching approach in a formal school setting and thus forms collaboratively a translanguaging classroom with one' students (Garcia et al. 2016).

Furthermore, as discussed by MacSwan (2022), translanguaging recognises the tension between external and internal languages by insisting that languages found in the mind are not the same as the abstractions called Finnish or Swedish language, for example.

Multilingual learners can and will bring linguistic diversity to the EFL classrooms and therefore enrich the learning environment. As discussed by Pitkänen-Huhta and Mäntylä (2014), many teachers lack skills to face multilingual students in a pedagogical manner and therefore leave student's lingual resources inactive or unrecognised during their classes. Translanguaging can be viewed from a sociolinguistic (for example bi/multilingual communities) or a pedagogical perspective, and the latter is being reviewed in local context: teaching in Finland has for long been designed for homogenous group of students (Finnish or Swedish speakers), while many modern classrooms consist of a much more heterogeneous group of learners (Alisaari et al. 2021). To add, Pitkänen-Huhta and Mäntylä (2014) mention that even though distinct changes have taken place when it comes to students' or pupils' lingual backgrounds, not much, if any action has taken place in order to adjust teaching methods to accommodate the new situation. Furthermore, a teacher may be insecure about singling out certain students because of their lingual backgrounds. Pitkänen-Huhta and Mäntylä (2014) mention that this can be interpreted in two ways: either the teacher aims not to single out anyone in one's classroom or finds using students' different lingual backgrounds too challenging. It is possible to inspect how these two possible reasons for not using lingual backgrounds to enhance teaching and learning are reflected in the results of the present study. Also, there are cases when a learner does not want to bring out their lingual expertise by their own choice. Pitkänen-Huhta and Mäntylä (2014) discuss that this kind of behaviour might be a consequence of class or school atmosphere which does not encourage or promote other languages or because the learner is not proud or secure about one's own lingual background.

As discussed by Alisaari et al. (2021), teachers should be enforcing translanguaging in the classroom environment: by using the learner's whole lingual repertoire, it is possible to achieve better academic learning results and develop learner's identity. Alisaari et al. (2021) also mention that using one's entire lingual repertoire for learning should be made possible in the school environment, and to achieve that every teacher should evaluate their pedagogical practices and beliefs if they are not already in line with the aforementioned goal. Furthermore, according to Garcia et al. (2016), teachers who enforce translanguaging in the

classroom environment have a strong orientation towards social justice, which will be briefly discussed during the next section.

### 1.2 Inclusion and equity in socially just teaching

Inclusion can be viewed as a phenomenon, where every single individual is mutually respected and valued as a member of the community (Kauppinen et al. 2022). Its ultimate goal is to achieve social inclusion, where different individuals and social groups have equal and full possibilities to be part of the society (Kauppinen et al. 2022). The basic principles and requirements for inclusion to take place in education is that everyone should be able to attend school, learn, receive support and improve one's skills, which requires that all the members of the school staff (teachers, education coordinators etc.) are devoted to the basic principles of inclusive education (Kauppinen et al. 2022).

As discussed by Steele and Cohn-Vargas (2013), using diversity as a resource for teaching should be considered carefully depending on the group of students and its ultimate goal is to create a feeling of inclusivity. As they mention, "this approach is not about simply avoiding overt racism or stereotyping, but about creating an inclusive, curious, dynamic, academically rigorous environment in the classroom" (Steele et al. 2013: 72). This is why it is important for teachers to be able to consider, for example, how individual students see and feel different tasks given during English language classes and whether they find them relatable. According to Pitkänen-Huhta et al. (2014), many teachers in Finland also imply that they do not recognise learners' multilingualism as a weakness nor as a strength, which may leave multilingual students' lingual skills inactive and unrecognised.

Furthermore, surrounding social and environmental settings can affect the individual's feeling of inclusion during school hours: for example, different holiday celebrations may not be even close to their lives, such as Easter or Christmas. Vice versa, teachers should enforce different events that are important for minorities, such as Pride week or month. Steele and Cohn-Vargas (2013) describe that being sensitive to these kinds of issues can be perceived as teachers having "an equity lens", through which they can modify their actions towards a more inclusive environment.

As equality does not necessarily create itself in a classroom environment, social justice language teacher education plays a vital role in creating such a setting. Social justice teacher

education (SJTE) is a broader concept, which contains for example aspects of sociocultural consciousness, ability to use student's cultural and lingual backgrounds as a resource of teaching and being able to drive change towards a more equal learning environment for everyone (Hawkins 2011). According to Hawkins (2011), it is also important for teachers to recognise inequalities and adjust their pedagogical approaches in order to provide a more equal learning experience for everyone.

Although social justice teacher education is not directly in focus in this thesis, some aspects of it can be seen through the research results and therefore there is a possibility to see indirectly the amount or quality of social justice in a classroom as experienced and perceived by learners. To clarify, social justice teacher education and social justice pedagogy is mentioned in the Finnish National Core Curriculum by the Finnish National Agency for Education (2014) and therefore have a place in the Finnish education system and thus can be seen as a meaningful point of view to review.

### 1.3 Atmosphere and classroom interaction

Another important factor contributing towards inclusion in the English language classroom is classroom interaction. On one hand, teachers can create an environment that is encouraging and relaxed or on the other hand an environment with strict control and overruling authority. As discussed by Steele and Cohn-Vargas (2013), usually classrooms with enforced discipline are not the classrooms with successful or well-managed students. This can be explained through the teachers suppressing their students' personality and behaviour and thus creating a wall between open, communicative atmosphere and the classroom. It is proven that by creating a safe and relaxed environment for learning and communicating, teachers can create a setting that is identity safe for all of the students. Furthermore, when students feel that they are accepted as they are and they all have an important place in a classroom community, inclusion has been successful. Even in a case of unsuccessful action, such as wrong answer to a certain question, it is not perceived as a failure of the student and those situations can be turned into positive learning experiences. Ultimately, Steele and Cohn-Vargas (2013) state that it is equally important what students learn during their days at school and how they live together during those days. Feeling of inclusion in a classroom setting comes from the community's support and positive environment, in this case teachers and students, which is

why functioning classroom interaction plays a vital role in creating and upholding that feeling of inclusion.

## 3 Present study and methodology

In this section, data collection and analysis methods used during this study are described and explanation of why these certain methods were chosen is given.

### 3.1 Aim and research question

In this study, the main aim is to shed light on how inclusive EFL classrooms are when perceived from a learner's point of view in Finland. This phenomenon is quite difficult to define, which is why learners' perceptions and experiences in the EFL classroom are investigated during this study.

My research question is the following: How do learners, who are not speaking Finnish or English as their first language, perceive English language teaching in Finland from an inclusion point of view?

### 3.2 Data collection and participants

The data was collected through a semi-structured questionnaire (see Appendix). The respondents could answer it in Finnish or alternatively in English if that was an easier option for them. The questionnaire was chosen as a method to gather data because of the delicate and sensitive topic and to receive more answers when compared to interview-style of data collection, for example. The application used in data collection was Webropol, which provided an easy user interface, good platform for questionnaire-type of research, and can be used to generate different illustrations about the gathered data. Answering the questionnaire was completely anonymous.

The questionnaire was sent to various teachers and other authorities in the Jyväskylä region who teach or work with multilingual groups of learners, because they have closer contact to the possible participants and can therefore share the link to the questionnaire to anyone who is interested and suits the description of this study. Furthermore, it was considered easier for possible participants that their own teacher introduces the survey to them and explains the meaning behind it. The data gathering goal was set to approximately 20 to 30 participants, but due to challenges to find suitable respondents, the total number of participants were 13.

Therefore, the results of this study cannot be generalised, but rather used to inspect individual participants' experiences in an English language classroom in Finland.

## 3.3 Methods of analysis

Inclusion, in this case, was approached through a set of eleven questions, containing two open questions and nine multiple-choice questions. Two of the multiple-choice questions featured an open field if someone felt that they wanted to add something or specify their answers. The questionnaire was written in Finnish, but the questions were available in English if specifically requested. Likert's scale was used as a tool to analyse the data, because it suits well in research which tries to measure certain properties, such as motivation or attitude. Metsämuuronen (2006) calls Likert's scale as an interval scale, which can contain five to seven steps. The scale usually has stronger opinions in its far ends, such as 1=totally disagree and 5=totally agree and includes a neutral answer (in this case 3=neutral) which falls in between of the far ends. As discussed by Metsämuuronen, usually answer numbers one and two (and likewise four and five) in a five-step scale are very close to each other, so the gap between them is much smaller than the gap between answer options two and three (or four and three) because of answers one and two being negative and answer three being neutral.

The multiple-choice questions were analysed mainly through quantitative analysis and open answers with qualitative analysis and compared with each other. Open questions give participants the opportunity to clarify and elaborate their answers further, which then helps to determine if some answers share the same background with each other. Defined by Metsämuuronen (2006), quantitative content analysis focuses on pre-structured questions, which are sent to the survey's target group and usually can be used to create a more general perspective about the subject. Qualitative content analysis differs from its quantitative counterpart, and it focuses on open-ended questions in order to define more specific areas of the study and to gather first-hand experience-related data, which may be difficult or impossible to gather through structured questions. Both of these analysis methods are commonly used in human sciences and therefore fit the nature of this study well.

Because of the construction of the questionnaire, answers were first analysed from different perspectives and further analysed together, to see what common themes arise from them. Many of the questions have a direct link to multiple perspectives, which can be seen in the analysis process.

**4 Results and discussion**

In this chapter, the results of the survey are presented and what they reveal regarding the matter of this study. The analysis is divided into three chapters. Chapter about the learner's perspective focuses on how learners' feel about their recognition and inclusion in the English language classroom. Perceptions of teacher's actions analyses the findings from a more pedagogical view, and the last chapter shifts focus on classroom atmosphere.

**4.1 Learner's perspective**

This section presents the results regarding learners' perceptions towards inclusion in an English language classroom. The questionnaire included multiple questions regarding their language usage in the classroom, in order to get a better understanding about the subject from different angles and perspectives.

Out of 13 (n=13) participants only under 10% implied that they use their full language potential always during classes and approximately 45% answered that they use their lingual repertoire regularly (Question 2). Roughly another 45% stated that they use their repertoire rarely or never, the main stress being on the answer option never. The answers are divided quite equally, which shows that learners' perceptions and experiences towards language use and general classroom atmosphere vary between different groups.

Answers to another question regarding teachers asking about the learners' lingual backgrounds (Question 1) show that only 27% of learners feel that their teacher has always asked about their lingual background. Slightly under half of the answers (46%) to the same question state that learners' lingual background is asked only rarely or never by teacher. This shows that some teachers note learners' lingual backgrounds better than others, which contributes towards social justice and inclusion: encouraging learners to use their whole lingual repertoire can positively affect their learning outcomes and identity by providing equal learning opportunities to everyone in the classroom (Alisaari et al. 2021). However, when respondents were given an opportunity to clarify their answer in an open question regarding languages they use during EFL lessons, the answers indicated that none of the respondents used other languages than Finnish or English in the classroom. This shows that even though some teachers are aware of the learners' lingual backgrounds according to the

answers, they seemingly do not encourage them to use languages other than English or Finnish during EFL lessons.

One thing was clear among the respondents: learning English is easier if one also speaks fluent Finnish. Roughly three out of four respondents answered positively to the Question 9 (see Table 1):

**Table 1:** Distribution of answers to Question 9 'Is learning English easier if one speaks also fluent Finnish?'

|  | Yes | No | Average | Median |
|---|---|---|---|---|
|  | 76,9% | 23,1% | 1,2 | 1,0 |

Some respondents wanted to elaborate their answer further with their own words and had different opinions about the matter:

**Examples:** Open answers to Question 9 (translated from Finnish)

1) "If one can speak and understand (Finnish), it is easy to learn and understand texts."
2) "It is."
3) "No it is not, languages are completely different."

This answer can be linked directly to the language of instruction: as Illman and Pietilä (2018) discussed, the majority of English teachers teach their subject through Finnish. It is clear that the respondents of this study have made the same observation based on their answers. Three respondents felt that speaking Finnish does not matter when it comes to learning English. Ultimately, the majority (ten respondents) still felt that speaking Finnish makes learning of English easier, which creates an unequal learning setting in the classroom.

## 4.2 Perceptions of teacher's actions

In this section, the focus is on the teacher's actions and pedagogical practices in the English language classroom. As discussed in the previous chapter, almost half of the respondents felt that their teacher has not asked or asked rarely about their lingual background: this might be caused because the teacher is afraid to single out certain students because of their lingual

background or lacks skills to use learner's lingual repertoire in a pedagogical manner (Pitkänen-Huhta et al. 2014). Six respondents also felt that their English language teacher only rarely creates and maintains a relaxed and comfortable learning environment, where everyone is taken into account. Such a result implies that by not being aware or using learners' lingual backgrounds teacher may passively leave some of the learners' feeling that they are being left out or the general classroom atmosphere is not creating the feeling of inclusion. Furthermore, eight respondents indicated that their English language teachers do not usually support or enforce translanguaging, which is quite opposite practice when compared with theories around the topic: according to Alisaari et al. (2021), using the learner's complete lingual repertoire can enhance the overall learning experience and identity development. When asked about whether translanguaging is supported during classes by teachers (Question 7), the results show that translanguaging is not preferred according to roughly 61% of the respondents (see Table 2):

**Table 2:** Distribution of answers to Question 7 'Does your teacher encourage translanguaging?'

| | 1 (never) | 2 (rarely) | 3 (regularly) | 4 (often) | 5 (always) | Average | Median |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 30,7% | 30,8% | 7,7% | 23,1% | 7,7% | 2,5 | 2,0 |

Answers regarding the question about learners' language usage in the English language classroom (Question 10) also indicate that translanguaging does not take place during formal teaching or classroom practices: respondents felt that they only use languages other than English or Finnish during informal activities, such as talking with friends, answering text messages or only at home. So, the respondents' answers indicate that translanguaging pedagogy does not take place during classes, and full use of their lingual repertoire focuses more on communication with their friends and independent schoolwork, as the following answers to the open question demonstrate:

**Examples:** Open answers to Question 10 'In what kind of situations do you use languages other than English or Finnish in the classroom?' (Translated from Finnish)

4) "For example if I receive a message or something similar in a certain language."

5) "With friends."

6) "At home, with friends that have same nationality, with my kin."

Only two respondents answered that they have only been using their home language during independent work, such as searching for information or trying to understand something through their own home language:

**Examples:** Open answers to Question 10

7) "Usually when searching for information and while preparing for word tests, before I learned to speak Finnish fluently. During translation-, reading and writing tasks, when I translated reading chapters, tasks/task instructions or while writing essays. Also sometimes while we were learning grammar. So pretty much in every situation I wanted to use my mother tongue." (Translated from Finnish)

8) "The rare occasions when I found myself in a group with other French-speakers we would speak French only if one of use could not translate a world or didn't know how to express something - only for vocabulary reasons" (Original answer)

These observations about translanguaging and pedagogical practices and how they are linked to feeling of inclusion in the classroom can be further enforced when looking to the answers of Question 4, regarding that do people with shared lingual background usually work together in the classroom:

**Table 3:** Distribution of answers to Question 4 'Is it common that people with the same kind of lingual background get together during group work in English classes?'

| | 1 (never) | 2 (rarely) | 3 (regularly) | 4 (often) | 5 (always) | Average | Median |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 7,7% | 15,4% | 15,4% | 23,1% | 38,4% | 3,7 | 4,0 |

As shown, the average number 3,7 shows that people with similar lingual backgrounds usually work together during classes. When compared to previously presented open-ended answers, they also indicate that most of the multilingual activity takes place with friends or during independent classwork, so it is possible that by not actively using or encouraging

translanguaging in the classroom teacher creates smaller groups of learners with similar lingual backgrounds. Furthermore, this indicates that translanguaging pedagogy is not taking place during EFL lessons in these cases and learners' lingual skills remain inactive from a pedagogical point of view.

## 4.3 Atmosphere in the classroom

General classroom atmosphere is created equally by its people, so this section focuses on how teacher(s) and learners contribute towards it. Answers of the questionnaire imply that the lingual atmosphere is not simply strict, but not loose either: Under half of the respondents felt that usage of different languages is accepted by teachers, but the majority felt that using mainly English is required (Question 8).

What is more, translanguaging in general was not usually accepted in the classroom environment: eight of the respondents felt that their teachers were not supporting translanguaging during their classes. As discussed by Alisaari et al. (2021), generally Finnish teachers do not usually plan or encourage translanguaging during their teaching, which means that this phenomenon is not taking place only in the English language classrooms.

It was quite surprising to find out that over 46% of the respondents felt that their English language teachers rarely build a relaxed and comfortable atmosphere in the classroom. This has a direct link to inclusion in the classroom, because feeling of inclusion might be harder or impossible to achieve, if the teacher is not creating a comfortable environment for all of the learners. Seven respondents implied that their teacher build that kind of atmosphere in the classroom regularly or always:

**Table 4:** Distribution of answers to Question 6 'Does your teacher actively build a relaxed and comfortable atmosphere in the classroom, where everybody is taken into account?'

| | 1 (never) | 2 (rarely) | 3 (regularly) | 4 (often) | 5 (always) | Average | Median |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 0,0% | 46,1% | 23,1% | 7,7% | 23,1% | 3,1 | 3,0 |

Furthermore, the answers regarding that are learners comfortable bringing their lingual expertise up for example during presentations, slight majority (seven respondents) answered that they are comfortable with it regularly or always: still, six of the respondents are not comfortable about showing their lingual expertise during classroom activities. This implies that either teacher is not encouraging it, or the general classroom atmosphere may make the learner feel insecure about the subject. If the general classroom atmosphere does not support the learner to show one's lingual repertoire during different class activities, it can be considered that the classroom is not inclusive in certain regard towards learners with certain lingual backgrounds. The table 5 below shows that how comfortable respondents were about bringing their lingual expertise up during class activities (Question 5):

**Table 5:** Distribution of answers to Question 5 'Are you comfortable to show your lingual expertise to the whole class, for example through presentations or group work?'

|  | 1<br>(never) | 2<br>(rarely) | 3<br>(regularly) | 4<br>(often) | 5<br>(always) | Average | Median |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
|  | 7,7% | 38,4% | 15,4% | 15,4% | 23,1% | 3,1 | 3,0 |

Ten of the respondents feel that they are in the English language classroom as learners (Question 11) when it comes to their own language use. It is a quite common opinion and feeling due to the learning environment and teacher-student relationships, where teacher is the expert of the subject and students are learners, but it is still quite interesting to see that only one of the respondents implied that one is also an expert language user. This outcome can be explained in two ways: either the question regarding the matter was too difficult to grasp or learners' feel that their language use is simply not advanced enough to call themselves an expert.

## 5 Conclusions

The main aim of this study was to shed light on how learners with different lingual backgrounds feel about inclusion in English language classrooms in Finland. The feeling and experience of inclusion varies from one individual to another and because of that the collected data does not imply the absolute truth about inclusion in the EFL classrooms, but rather the perception of individuals and their feelings about the phenomena in their classroom environment. However, the collected data shows which areas probably have room for improvement and which areas show less need for intervention.

The data collected for this study is in line with previous research about the subject: teachers may be aware about the lingual resources of their classrooms, but many of them do not use the learners' lingual repertoire as part of their teaching and pedagogy, as the learners' responses to the survey show. To add, previous research suggests that many teachers in Finland do not recognise multilinguality as a strength nor weakness, leaving the learners' lingual repertoire and skills inactive, which also falls in line with this study's gathered data. English language teaching is not perceived to always create inclusion within this study's target group: this can be linked to general classroom atmosphere and teacher's actions and limitations regarding multilingualism. Even though the majority of the responses for example to Question 7 implied that English language classrooms and teaching do not regularly promote possibilities to use their lingual repertoire or translanguaging, some respondents felt the opposite. This indicates that classroom practices regarding language policy vary between different groups.

Gathering the data was quite a bit more complicated than assumed, which was in a way quite an important learning experience. The target group was quite specific, which provided its own challenges during the data collection phase, and I would do things differently next time: for example, contacting schools directly was not too effective, but reaching individual teachers turned out to be more successful. Also, in the future I would perhaps choose an interview with open-ended questions as my method, as it would give me more specific information regarding the matter.

Mostly the results of this study could be used to develop teacher training, inspect classroom practices and pedagogy in language teaching and to research the subject further. This study also gives a glimpse how individual learners' feel about teachers recognising and drawing on their lingual backgrounds during English language classes. In my opinion it is important to

approach this subject from a learner's point of view because they know how they feel about certain pedagogical practices (or lack of them), which is valuable information for teachers and teacher students as well. Teachers' perceptions and challenges are more widely previously researched regarding the matter, but there is still more ground to cover. This topic is extremely relevant nowadays in Finland, which provides a meaning to continue the research on the matter and develop for example translanguaging pedagogy and support models for multilingual learners further.

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**Appendix**

**Questionnaire**

Kyselyn aloituskappale:

Sinua pyydetään mukaan tutkimukseen "Oppilaiden tuntemukset inkluusiosta englannin kielen oppitunneilla". Tutkielman tavoitteena on tuottaa tietoa siitä, tuntevatko oppilaat, joiden äidinkieli on joku muu kuin suomi tai englanti, saamansa opetuksen herättävän inkluusion tunteita. Inkluusiolla tarkoitetaan kaikkien ihmisten yhtäläistä arvostamista ja kunnioittamista niin yksilönä kuin yhteisön jäsenenä riippumatta heidän taustoistaan.

Sinua pyydetään tutkimukseen, koska puhut äidinkielenäsi jotain muuta kieltä kuin englantia tai suomea. Tutkimus on yksittäinen tutkimus, eikä sinuun oteta myöhemmin uudestaan yhteyttä. Tutkimukseen osallistuminen on vapaaehtoista. Kyselyyn vastaaminen vie noin 10–15 minuuttia eikä se vaadi sinulta vastaamisen jälkeen muita toimenpiteitä. Kyselyyn vastataan anonyymisti ja tulokset analysoidaan määrällisesti niin että yksittäistä vastaajaa ei voi niistä tunnistaa.

Tutkimuksen tulokset julkaistaan kandidaatintutkielmana keväällä 2023 Jyväskylän yliopiston JYX-julkaisuarkistossa. Tuloksia voidaan käyttää luokkahuoneiden inkluusion ja siihen vaikuttavan toiminnan tarkasteluun. Tulokset antavat kuvaa esimerkiksi siitä, kokevatko oppilaat, että luokkahuoneessa on inkluusiota ja mitkä tekijät vaikuttavat sen kokemiseen.

Tutkimuksen tekijän yhteystiedot

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Tutkimuksen tietosuojailmoitus löytyy oheisesta linkistä:

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1Ywj9pPmEkd3VKv8_BIMcgVqSbfOJdadOTcbIAjkAPpE/edit?usp=sharing

Ohjeet vastaamiseen:

- Kysymysten 1-7 aikana käytetään vastaamisessa asteikkoa 1-5, joissa

1=ei koskaan

2=harvoin

3=säännöllisesti

4=usein

5=aina

- Kysymykset 8 ja 9 sisältävät kyllä/ei-vastauksen ja avoimen kohdan vastauksen täydentämiseen.

- Kysymykset 10 ja 11 sisältävät vain avoimen kohdan vastaamiseen.

1. Ovatko opettajasi kysyneet kielellisestä taustastasi englannin kielen oppitunneilla?
2. Käytätkö kielirepertuaariasi (eli erilaisia kieliä mitä puhut) englannin kielen oppitunneilla?
3. Kuinka usein englannin kielen opettajasi on antanut mahdollisuuden jakaa luokassa eroja tai yhtäläisyyksiä englannin ja oman äidinkielesi välillä?
4. Onko yleistä, että samanlaisen kielellisen taustan omaavat ihmiset työskentelevät yhdessä luokkahuoneessa?
5. Onko sinulle mieleistä näyttää kielellistä osaamistasi koko luokalle esimerkiksi esitelmien tai ryhmätyön muodossa?
6. Luoko opettaja englannin kielen tunneilla rentoa ja mukavaa oppimisympäristöä, jossa jokainen on otettu huomioon?
7. Suosiiko englannin kielen opettajasi useiden kielten limittäistä käyttöä, eli voiko erilaisia kieliä sekoittaa puheessa?
8. Onko englannin kielen luokkahuoneessasi tiukka kielikäytäntö, eli esimerkiksi tuleeko englannin kielen tuntien aikana käyttää vain englantia? Kuvaile vastaustasi myös omin sanoin.
9. Onko englannin kielen oppiminen mielestäsi helpompaa, jos puhuu myös sujuvaa suomea? Kuvaile vastaustasi myös omin sanoin.
10. Millaisissa tilanteissa käytät jotain muuta kieltä kuin suomea tai englantia luokkahuoneessa?
11. Mikä on roolisi luokkahuoneessa kielenkäyttäjänä? Esimerkiksi asiantuntija, oppija...

**Questionnaire (translated version):**

1. Have your teachers asked about your lingual background during English language classes?

2. Do you use your lingual repertoire (languages that you speak) often during English classes?

3. How often has your English teacher given you an opportunity to share similarities or differences between English and your native language?

4. Is it common that people with the same kind of lingual background get together during group work in English classes?

5. Are you comfortable to show your lingual expertise to the whole class, for example through presentations or group work?

6. Does your teacher actively build a relaxed and comfortable atmosphere in the classroom, where everybody is taken into account?

7. Does your teacher encourage translanguaging?

8. Does your English classroom have a strict language policy? For example, is only the English language allowed? Describe also with your own words.

9. Is learning English easier if one speaks also fluent Finnish? Describe also with your own words.

10. In what kind of situations do you use languages other than English or Finnish in the classroom? For example during group work or before official teaching begins?

11. What is your role in the classroom (learner, expert language user etc)?