

“Teachers teach so well that it’s nice to learn”:
**A case-study on the role of teacher-to-student feedback in
attitude-formation on L2 elementary English lessons**

Master’s thesis
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<p>Tiivistelmä - Abstract</p> <p>Arviointi ja palautteenanto ovat oleellisia asioita opettajan jokapäiväisessä työssä. Lisäksi asenteiden tutkiminen on tällä hetkellä suosittu tutkimusala.</p> <p>Tässä tapaustutkimuksessa tutkittiin, millaista vuorovaikutuksellista palautetta opettaja antaa oppilailleen alakoulun englannin kielen tunneilla, ja millainen yhteys sillä on oppilaiden asenteisiin englannin kieltä kohtaan.</p> <p>Tutkimusaineisto koostui kolmesta opettajasta ja heidän oppilaistaan; yksi englannin kielen aineenopettaja ja hänen viidesluokkalainen ryhmänsä sekä kaksi luokanopettajaa ja heidän neljäs- ja viidesluokkalaisensa. Tutkimusaineisto koottiin metodisella triangulaatiolla. Aluksi oppilaille teetettiin kartoittava kysely heidän asenteistaan englannin kieltä kohtaan. Tämän jälkeen englannin kielen oppitunteja havainnoitiin ja videoitiin 3h/luokka. Lopuksi kyselyjen pohjalta valittiin jokaiselta luokalta kaksi oppilasta haastatteluun ja haastattelut nauhoitettiin.</p> <p>Havainnoinnin perusteella yleisimpiä vuorovaikutuksellisia palautteenmuotoja olivat: ylistävä palaute, korjaava palaute, opettajan odotukset ja yksilöllistetty palaute. Oppilaiden asenteisiin kieltä kohtaan kyselyjen ja haastattelujen pohjalta puolestaan vaikuttivat: opettajan luonne ja ammattimaisuus, englannin kielen välinearvo, hyvä luokkailmapiiri ja yksilön merkitys.</p> <p>Aiheen rajaamiseksi aineistoa analysoitaessa non-verbaalista palautetta ei huomioitu. Mahdollisten jatkotutkimusten kannalta voisikin olla siis mielenkiintoista selvittää non-verbaalisen palautteen roolia ilmiö kannalta. Lisäksi tutkimuksen fokus oli opettajan palautteessa oppilaalle, mutta voisi olla mielenkiintoista selvittää esimerkiksi vertaispalautteen yhteyttä ilmiölle.</p>	
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1 INTRODUCTION

People receive and give feedback every day in different kinds of situations both consciously and unconsciously, according to some certain behaviour or incident. Indeed, various actions in one's life are based on assessment; for example, how one succeeds at school or in work-life, as well as whether one is allowed to drive a car or not. Moreover, people constantly evaluate their own or others' thoughts, feelings, and so forth. (Ihme 2009: 85.)

As Hattie and Timperley (2007) describe it, feedback can be regarded as "a consequence of performance". However, when the concept of feedback is considered, one may usually think of concrete written feedback, but it is to be noted that we also tend to evaluate other people verbally and non-verbally, as aforementioned. Not all feedback is therefore written or based on numbers – such as grades at school.

The role of feedback is undoubtedly rather apparent in teaching. That is to say, evaluation is continuously present and the way how students are evaluated has a significant role in students' everyday lives. In particular, the interaction between a teacher and a student is noteworthy because, for instance, the sincerity and equity of feedback usually have a major impact on a student's attitudes towards the learning process, as well as one's self-esteem.

In a Finnish school-context the main aims in providing feedback are to encourage during the learning process and assessing the learner's development realistically. What is more, the assessment highly concentrates on supporting a student's personal growth. (POPS 2004: 262.) As a teacher-to-be, I find feedback significant in teaching, since I consider evaluation as one of the corner stones in the profession of a teacher.

In particular, a teacher's personal values and pedagogical philosophy have a major influence on decisions concerning evaluation. Moreover, according to a

Finnish Basic Education Act, the progress of a learner's studies has to be followed systematically (POPS 2004: 15). I person interpret the latter clearly to imply that in order to be accurately capable of following one's development, assessment is required.

Although feedback and assessment have a significant role at schools, I have never met one single teacher who would have said assessment to be easy or straightforward. Giving feedback is, however, a process that can be developed consciously and I therefore hope that the present study provides future teachers with tools on how one is able to create a sincere atmosphere in the classroom where every individual is assessed and encouraged.

Furthermore, although the role of qualitative feedback at school has been studied to some extent (see e.g. Hattie and Timperley 2007; Hall and Burke 2004), its occurrence particularly on L2 English¹ lessons has been examined from a rather narrow viewpoint. Indeed, there are some theories on how feedback in interaction is constructed during L2 English lessons (see e.g. Sinclair and Coulthard 1975; Lyster and Ranta 1997; Lyster and Saito 2010), but these theories form a fairly structured and set pattern of actions. There is therefore a lack of information on how feedback is constructed in a classroom via spontaneous and sincere interaction.

As mentioned earlier, feedback evidently affects its receiver's attitudes one way or another. When English as a school-subject is considered, there have admittedly been studies on students' attitudes towards it (see, e.g. Bartram 2010). Nevertheless, there has been little research on how assessment in interaction specifically influences students' attitudes towards English as a language.

I believe that the relationship between feedback and attitudes is crucial in teaching. One of the prominent purposes in the present study is therefore to

¹ L2 English refers to English one has acquired as his or her second language.

denote the importance of that relation for all teachers. In consequence, in the light of the present study, it is worth exploring:

- 1) What kinds of different forms of teacher-to-student feedback in interaction are there in English classes at primary school?
- 2) What is the relationship between teacher-to-student feedback in interaction and learners' personal attitudes towards English as a language?

The participants of the present study were three teachers and their classes. One of the teachers is a subject teacher of English, as well as her group of 5th graders. The other two are class teachers in the 4th and 5th grade, and they also teach English to their classes. The data-gathering consisted of three different forms of data. Firstly, a questionnaire was carried out to the students in order to map their conceptions and attitudes towards English as a language, as well as studying it. Secondly, each class was observed and videotaped for three hours, meaning a total of nine hours of observation. The aim of the observations was to explore what kind of methods for interactive feedback there are during an English class. Thirdly, on the basis of the observations, two pupils from each class were chosen for an interview, the goal of which was to deepen the understanding of answers of the questionnaire and the observed English lessons.

When the content of the thesis is considered, the theoretical framework of the present study is presented at first. The principal theoretical concepts of feedback, assessment and attitudes are discussed separately in independent chapters. The chapter 2 concentrates on defining the concept of feedback, as well as presenting the most common interactive feedback forms in a classroom. In turn, the chapter 3 provides an outlook on assessment concentrating particularly on the concept of *formative assessment*.

Furthermore, the role of L2 English is also explored in the chapter 4 and popular approaches to classroom interaction are introduced in the chapter 5. The chapter

6 has its focus on defining and presenting the concept of attitudes – and its relation to learning and assessment. Then, the idea of the present study is introduced in the chapter 7. Next, the analysis of the present study is divided into two separate chapters 8 and 9, followed by the chapter of discussions: the chapter 10. Finally, the conclusion is made and the main points of the present study are summarised.

2 FEEDBACK

There are various methods for how the teacher can create a link between the wanted aim for learning and the real performance of his or her students. Naturally, it consists of setting certain, suitable goals for the whole learning process; specific aims associated with appropriate feedback usually indicate the required criteria for attaining the demanded goals for learning. (Hattie and Timperley 2007; Nicol and Macfarlane-Dick 2006; Arter 2003.) For example, when a student is given extensive feedback regularly throughout the learning process, s/he conceives the overall picture of his or her improvement. Consequently, it can be concluded that feedback provides one with information of his or her performance – and the possible need for potential development.

In general, feedback seems to be a rather multi-dimensional and complex phenomenon due to the fact that there are several types of feedback (Poulos 2008). According to Black and Wiliam (1998), feedback can roughly be divided into two different categories: directive and facilitative. Indeed, they suggest that directive is based on distinct, rather detailed information on what the learner has to do in order to achieve learning development. In turn, facilitative feedback has its focus on suggestions and guidance for individual thinking rather than explicit instruction. It, however, seems not perfectly clear which of the types of feedback can be considered ultimately more beneficial for the learner (Shute 2008). What can, however, be considered crucial for learning is that the effectiveness of feedback is more significant if the given feedback also provides information on the correct answer, than just implies if a learner answered correctly or not (Black and Wiliam 1998).

As it was aforementioned, it can, thus, be noted that the role of facilitative feedback gives the students a better opportunity to develop one's problem-solving skills, since the error is not pointed out in an overtly obvious manner. Consequently, the concepts of directive and facilitative feedback are also known

as form-focused and meaning-focused feedback (Gurzynski-Weiss and Révész 2012; Mackey 2006).

In other words, form-focused feedback is usually fairly detailed. As an example, it can have its emphasis on grammar and other linguistic structures, whereas meaning-focused feedback is more concentrated on contextual factors, such as the coherence of a text. However, it is to be noted that the content of feedback depends highly on the learning goal which is meant to achieve. That is, the feedback which concentrates more on contextual factors can perhaps be regarded as more useful in the long run when the development of a learner is considered, but, for example, it is sometimes important to pay attention to linguistic forms and patterns, as well.

As Törmä (2011: 125) states, the term feedback can sometimes create rather negative associations since it can be considered as a part of behaviourism (see s. 2.3). Nevertheless, she argues that when feedback has its bases on a different kind of ideology for learning, the term establishes utterly different, positive meanings. Indeed, instead of plainly indicating errors, the role of explanatory feedback is needed in order to support the development of a student. Indeed, Arter (2003: 473) points out the powerful role of descriptive feedback; what it is that a learner can do to enhance his or her performance. That is, the concept of descriptive feedback refers to the importance of clarifying the targets of development for the learner in order to make the whole learning process as advantageous as possible.

As it was aforementioned, the set goals for the learning process affect what kind of feedback is needed in order to achieve development. For example, emphasis on details can be needed in order to hone one's performance to the maximum, whereas concentration on more general guidelines accompany the holistic learning of an individual. The following figure (Figure 1) illustrates the divisional classification between form-focused and meaning-focused feedback:

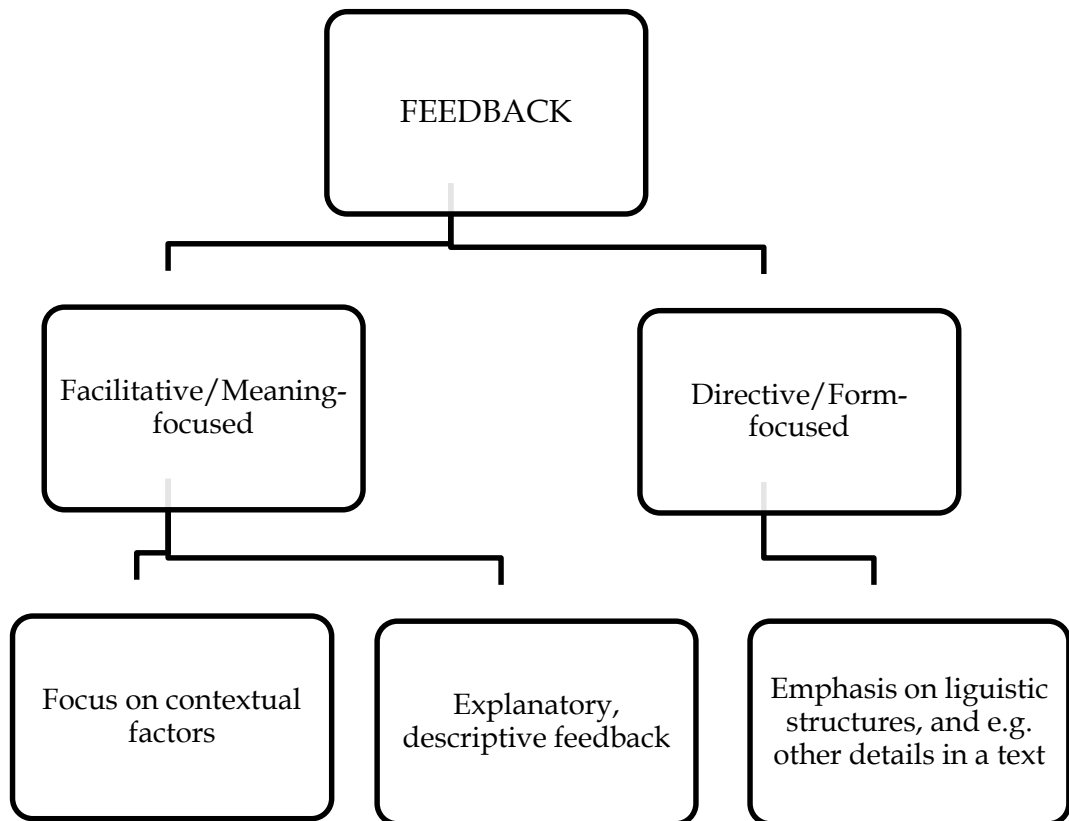


Figure 1: A classification for feedback-giving.

Since the present study is interested in interactive feedback in a classroom, the following two sections will concentrate on explaining the phenomenon, as well as introduce different kinds of forms of interactive feedback at schools. Furthermore, the connection between feedback and learning is presented and studied from the viewpoint of language learning in more detail.

2.1 FEEDBACK IN INTERACTION

According to Törmä (2011: 120-121), feedback in interaction is based on continuous oral assessment in a classroom between a teacher and student, as well as evaluative discussions, in which the parents of a student are also present. Thus, interactive feedback can be considered to be much more than the teacher exclusively assessing his or her students. In other words, teacher-to-student feedback can simply be defined as feedback provided from a teacher to his or her

students. The given feedback can be either written (e.g. grades) or oral (e.g. praise for a correct answer). This section, however, concentrates solely on feedback in interaction, and it is connected to continuous process of assessment – formative assessment. The concept of formative assessment will, however, be presented later more thoroughly in the chapter 3.

When having a sincere teacher-student relationship, students are likely to appreciate the provided feedback - either positive or negative - more notably compared to situations where teacher-student interaction cannot be considered as successful (Reinke et al. 2011: 12). In consequence, it seems rather self-evident that teacher-student interaction affects a great deal on how students perceive the learning situation.

Törmä (2011) states that teaching methods also influence the feedback-giving practices. For instance, even if the methods were intended to be as interactive as possible, the time for providing feedback might be limited due to the several confrontations between different students. Nevertheless, she emphasises that even though the interactive feedback was rather minimal, it has a very important role for primary school students, in particular. Furthermore, Törmä (2011: 122) argues that in order to be able to have more resources for providing feedback in challenging situations, teachers have to pay attention to how the teaching is organized. Thus, it seems that in order to manage to provide sufficient feedback, contributions are demanded.

Rather surprisingly, Carnell (2000: 47) points out that students usually understand teacher-to-student feedback as one-way communication where teacher just simply assesses students' performance. She further notes that even if teacher initiated a dialogue with his or her students, the dialogue would not, however, succeed for some reason or another. Instead, students seem to perceive dialogue as an action of reciprocity and co-operation with each other; student-to-student. According to Carnell (2000: 47, 50), students consequently seem to comprise dialogue as a spontaneous and informal situation that, by any means,

cannot be related to the usual, alleged conventions at school. One can, thus, wonder whether the interactive teaching methods are proper and enough motivating.

2.2 INTERACTIVE FEEDBACK IN A CLASSROOM

The mutual context between learning and teaching is significant. That is to say, the context involves learner's personal interpretation or construction of the surrounding learning environment. Consequently, every individual has their own perception of the taught content. When the role of a teacher is, however, considered here, the teacher has a prominent effect on improving the learning processes of every individual, which construct the understanding of a specific matter. Furthermore, teachers have recently realised the actual importance of the participation of students in assessment. In other words, the benefits of feedback in interaction are perhaps understood better. (Hall and Burke 2004: 5, 52.)

It is to be noted that instead of occurring only one-way from a teacher to a student, feedback seems to affect a great deal when it is provided in an interaction. For example, Törmä (2011: 180) says that her teacher-identity – and, thus, the role as a feedback giver – consists of her personal values; what she truly perceives important and meaningful. She emphasises the significance of interaction when giving feedback, since she argues that if a learner has the opportunity to discuss and participate in assessment, it will support the learner's self-confidence and personal growth.

Oliver and Mackey (2003) explored different teacher-student interactional contexts in child L2 classrooms, and the effect of the contexts on the quality of feedback provided. Five qualified Australian ESL teachers at primary school level, and their students at the age of 6 to 12 years old participated in the study. Since the aim of the study was to examine classroom interaction, the classes of each teacher were observed and videotaped. On the basis of their study, they suggest that using and providing feedback in a classroom is rather dependent on

the differing interactional contexts. The majority of the productions made by the learners, which did not correspond to the target-like models, resulted in teacher-to-student feedback in all contexts. Nevertheless, when all of the contexts were compared with each other, feedback was provided most frequently in the explicit language-focused context. The finding perhaps implies the idea of a conservative model of language teaching where the teacher tends to concentrate more on grammar and structures, rather than the ability to communicate via foreign language.

Bergh et al. (2013) studied classroom interaction, and particularly the occurrence of feedback during lessons. The study involved 32 Dutch teachers and, all in all, 13 schools in the Netherlands. The students consisted of sixth, seventh and eighth graders. The classroom interaction was examined by videotaping the teaching sessions and, on the basis of the findings, approximately 50 percent of the observed interactive situations involved feedback. However, what was rather surprising, was that only 5 percent of the provided feedback actually correlated to the set aims for learning. Furthermore, most given feedback was recognised to be directive rather than facilitative (see Figure 1, s. 2).

As it was also aforementioned; it further seems that the patterns for providing feedback are dependent on the context of teaching; whether the focus is form-focused or meaning-focused (Gurzynski-Weiss and Révész 2012). For example, according to a study by Gurzynski-Weiss and Révész (2012), teacher feedback was more likely to occur in form-focused contexts than contexts having its emphasis more on communication than grammatical structures.

2.2.1 Teacher-to-student feedback

More often than not, the teacher inevitably has a powerful and noticeable role in a classroom. In consequence, the teacher naturally has a significant impact on the course of events and the atmosphere during a lesson, too. According to Cullingford (2010: 10-11), the indications of a good teacher usually involve the following: a warm atmosphere, the understanding of every individual's needs,

an organized classroom, as well as the praising of favourable outcomes. Rather similarly, Carnell (2000: 54) presents the following qualities to be a consequence of teacher-to-student feedback:

- 1) the teacher enables clarifications for the achieved aims,
- 2) gives justifications and reasons for learning,
- 3) analyses and diagnoses one's errors,
- 4) and simply helps the students to develop and learn.

It can, thus, be stated that the provision of feedback is one the most vital elements affecting success in the profession of a teacher. Indeed, feedback seems to be significant when the development during the whole learning process is considered.

In general, the values of a teacher have an impact on how s/he perceives him- or herself, as well as his or her students. Furthermore, the values influence and guide the teachers' actions in a classroom. (Jordan et al. 2008: 147.) Thus, it is to be noted that if the actions of a teacher are explored, one's personal values can also affect the way how s/he provides feedback. In consequence, the given feedback is always worth examining critically, since the composition for providing feedback can consistently be regarded as one's subjective viewpoint of a situation.

When interactive feedback is considered, many teachers seem to find oral assessment challenging. For example, in order to be able to provide as informative oral feedback as possible, it really requires time and effort (Ihme 2009: 101). What is more, it can be stated that the Finnish schooling system has earlier had its emphasis actively on written and summative assessment. At the same time, it is to be noted that the means of providing feedback consist of various different methods, and in order to make the situation of giving feedback as beneficial as possible for its receiver, an extensive understanding of the methods is needed. Consequently, this chapter introduces and discusses different forms of interactive teacher-to-student feedback individually in order to simplify the comprehension for the reader.

Teacher praise

One way of indicating, for instance, a correct comprehension or a production of some specific task, is a complimentary utterance – praise – made by the teacher. It should, however, be taken into account that the praise is not always due to the correct answer provided by a learner. That is to say, a teacher can, for example, utilise it in order to encourage and motivate the learner. (Wong and Waring 2009.)

According to Möller (2005: 276), praise can act “as an expression of surprise, as an ice-breaker, or as a reinforcer” in teacher-student interaction. What is more, praise implies the positive, emotional stance of a teacher in the prevailing situation (Brophy 1981). Indeed, it can be concluded that teacher praise influences the construction of teacher-student relationships.

In order to make praise as effective and significant as possible, it ought to be circumstantial and individualised at the same time (Simonsen et al. 2010: 303). Furthermore, an honest praise can be considered notably advantageous for children’s learning motivation (Henderlong and Lepper 2002). For example, Hancock (2000) conducted a study exploring the effect of teachers’ verbal praise on students’ contributions to their homework. The study showed that students provided with verbal praise studied prominently more than students who received none.

It is to be noted that instead of regular positive feedback, praise may be either an incentive or a hindrance for one’s learning motivation due to its specificity. In addition, praise can be regarded as an intricate practice where the both content of praise and the prevailing context - as well as its receiver - have a significant role. What is more, praise ought to be distinguished from regular positive feedback that is not individualised, as well as encouragement which rather refers to future actions. (Henderlong and Lepper 2002.)

Criticism

Teacher criticism can be defined as the exact opposite of teacher praise; it indicates a negative teacher-to-student response. Furthermore, rather similarly as teacher praise, teacher criticism includes more than just regular negative feedback, and that is, for example, due to its individuality. (Brophy 1981.) In consequence, criticism can usually be associated with disapproval of student behaviour if a student acts in an unwanted way in a classroom.

According to Brophy (1981), teacher praise and criticism can be differentiated by the nature of them. Indeed, teacher praise can be regarded as a warm act, whereas teacher criticism implies a rejection. It can consequently be concluded that the usage of either teacher praise or criticism affects the mutual spirit in a classroom.

Corrective feedback

According to various studies concerning language learning, a form of assessment called corrective feedback (CF) has a notable role in a learner's development of a target language (Lyster and Saito 2010; Ammar and Spada 2006; Panova and Lyster 2002). A recent classroom-based study shows that, in particular, age-variable seems to have a vital impact on the effectiveness of CF; indeed, the younger the learner, the more efficient the outcome of the feedback is (Lyster and Saito 2010). Moreover, as Ammar and Spada (2006) argue on the bases of their study, low-proficiency language learners seem to have a more advantage on CF for their language development than low-proficiency learners who do not receive CF at all. In consequence, it can be concluded that, when taking the present study into consideration, corrective feedback seems to have an effective role for elementary school students.

Corrective feedback can roughly be divided into the following categories:

- 1) Explicit correction (= the teacher gives the correct answer as a response)
- 2) Recast (= the teacher alters the learner's answer implicitly by repeating and correcting it at the same time)
- 3) Prompt (= the teacher guides the learner to change his/her answer independently = self-repair)

The third category, prompt, can, however, be yet divided into four subcategories:

- a) Repetition (= the teacher repeats what has been said, but indicates, for example, using a certain tone that the answer is incorrect)
- b) Elicitation (= the teacher directly guides the learner to change his/her answer)
- c) Metalinguistic feedback (= a very implicit feedback form in which the teacher indicates the error by artifice)
- d) Clarification request (= teacher asks the learner to repeat his/her answer)

(Panova and Lyster 2002; Lyster and Mori 2006; Lyster and Saito 2010; Lyster and Ranta 1997)

What is more, Panova and Lyster (2002) mention a category *translation* made by the teacher. They consider that it can also be seen as feedback, for example, right after the learner uses his/her native language unasked during a specific learning task.

According to Panova and Lyster (2002: 588), when giving feedback in an adult intermediate ESL classroom, recasts and translations were used more frequently than ways of feedback supporting the students' self-repair, such as elicitation. Furthermore, Lyster and Ranta (1997) examined four French immersion classes at elementary school-level and the effectiveness of different types of feedback to learners' understanding. They found out that recast was the type of feedback provided most often - rather similarly as Sheen (2004) found out later in order to confirm the argument.

Nevertheless, when giving feedback, prompts seem to be the most effective way of enhancing learners' development (Lyster and Saito 2010; Lyster and Mori 2006). It ought to be taken into consideration that in order to support student uptake, a teacher has to deliberately decide what kinds of ways of giving feedback s/he uses. Indeed, the choice is highly dependent on the proficiency-level of a learner. (Lyster and Ranta 1997: 56-57.)

All in all, corrective feedback in all its forms can be considered as feedback from teacher-to-student. When the three main categories are, however examined, only recasts and prompts can be regarded as genuine interactive forms of giving feedback since they enable a possibility for the learner to answer and discuss with the teacher, whereas the category of explicit correction has somewhat one-way function. (Lyster and Mori 2006: 272.)

Teacher's expectations

It is to be noted that whether a teacher has high or low expectancies from his or her students, it seems to affect how s/he regards feedback, and provides it. Indeed, the fact how a teacher personally comprises the expectations in a classroom appears to have an impact on his or her practices in a classroom. For example, Rubie-Davies (2007) conducted a study of 12 primary school teachers in New Zealand and their differences in teaching practices according to whether a teacher had high or low expectations. The practices were classified into different categories and the category of feedback was divided into three different subcategories; learning feedback, praise and criticism. The findings showed that teachers with higher expectations were more likely to provide their students with feedback, whereas providing feedback seemed to have a rather uncommon role in the practices of the low-expectation teachers. (Rubie-Davies 2007: 294-295, 297, 301.)

In consequence, the expectations of a teacher can have an influence on how s/he interacts with one's students. For example, according to a study in several first-grade classrooms conducted by Brophy and Good (1970), teachers appeared to praise high-expectation students for their correct answers more frequently even though students with lower expectations answered correct less often. Furthermore, they presented that when low-expectation students provided incorrect answers, they were more likely to be disapproved by their teachers, compared to the students with higher expectations.

In addition, it seems that some teachers, than others, are more prone to criticizing low-expectation students, and these kinds of practices may have a massive impact on students' self-concept, as well as personal learner achievement (Rubie-Davies 2006: 539). Indeed, the latter notion can be considered a supportive argument for the idea that teachers' expectations can be seen as feedback to some extent since the expectations seem to affect the classroom interaction.

2.2.2 Student-to-student feedback

Student-student feedback, also known as peer feedback or peer assessment, is an agreement between two equal-status learners who assess each other's work (Topping 2009). Student-to-student feedback can sometimes be based on summative assessment, but it usually concentrates on assessment with formative purposes. Furthermore, a student generally has both roles: s/he provides his or her classmates feedback and receives it at the same time. (Li et al. 2010: 525; Topping 2009.)

Jang and Stecklein (2011: 82) state that teachers ought to evaluate and attentively consider both the quantity and quality of the feedback they provide. In other words, they suggest that, for instance, if the learners are encouraged to individual and group work instead of constant teacher meddling, it will lead to student-to-student discussions - and consequently peer feedback - more easily. They (2011: 83) further argue that teachers should consciously and actively assist in student-to-student interaction in order to make the classroom more active as a whole.

According to Topping (2009), peer feedback can be considered as effective as teacher feedback although students providing feedback were not as proficient as teachers. That is to say, he argues that peer feedback can be more impending and personal at times.

2.2.3 Self-assessment

Self-assessment can be considered to be highly related to student-centred learning; the student is individually capable of identifying, as well as solving learning problems, and in order to succeed in the process, self-assessment is required (McDonald 2012). Indeed, the development of metacognitive skills, i.e. the understanding of personal strengths and weaknesses as a learner, is needed if one is willing to engage in self-assessment (Bingham et al. 2010). Furthermore, the awareness of personal abilities, as well as the need for development, becomes more concrete if students have the chance for assessing their own work, and, more importantly, if the teacher is able to provide them with feedback on the basis of their own evaluation (Butler and Lee 2010: 6).

Self-assessment can have a remarkably positive impact on a learner's motivation. At the same time, one, however, has to take into account the age variable; what kinds of self-assessment tasks are suitable at some specific age-level. For example, students at elementary school-level naturally require more guidance and support for their learning, whereas more advanced students are able to manage individual tasks more easily. (Bingham et al. 2010.)

Since the main aim of self-assessment is to shape a responsible and independent learner, the target of self-assessment is not the learner as a person but, for example, his or her learning practices and motivation (Koppinen et al. 1994: 84). In order to understand the benefits of self-assessment, a learner has to be aware of the possible advantages and disadvantages for his or her learning. In consequence, s/he is able to pay attention to the learning process individually. (Koppinen et al. 1994: 89.)

2.2.4 Non-verbal feedback

Communication can be divided into two different categories; verbal and non-verbal communication. The latter consists of facial expressions, gestures as well as other physical movements – i.e. body language. Individuals convey different

messages via body language, such as thoughts and feelings, and these messages have a remarkable effect on how people assess one another – and even themselves. Furthermore, due to their depth-in-meaning, non-verbal clues can be regarded as significant as verbal communication. (Benzer 2012)

Although non-verbal-feedback can undoubtedly be considered a rather significant way of providing feedback, the present study is, however, concentrated on oral teacher-to-student feedback, in particular. However, at the same time, one has to take into consideration that sometimes it may be somewhat difficult to distinguish verbal and non-verbal feedback from each other, since they can be linked together strongly.

2.2.5 Evaluative discussions

Evaluative discussions are situations where the teacher, the student and at least one of the students' parents are present. The main aims of the discussions are to support the development and self-esteem of the student. Thus, it is essential that the interaction between the teacher and the parents is clearly focused on the aforementioned aims. (Koppinen 1994.)

Although the purpose of the discussions is to give the student the independent opportunities to speak and scrutinize his or her development, parents usually prove to be a good aid and support for the student (Koppinen 1994). In other words, the student can regard his or her parents as a safety net and, consequently, the sharing of personal thoughts may be easier.

2.2.6 Summary

As it can be seen, there are various ways of giving feedback at school. The present study concentrates on teacher-to-student feedback, but in order to understand the phenomenon more thoroughly, the different forms of interactive feedback are introduced in this first chapter of theoretical framework. In the following table,

the hierarchy of different forms of giving feedback is illustrated once more (Table 1):

Table 1: The different forms of feedback at school

FEEDBACK IN LEARNING	
The different forms of feedback	The typical features
Teacher-to-student feedback:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Teacher praise - Criticism - Corrective feedback - Teacher's expectations
Student-to-student feedback:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Oral feedback - Written feedback
Self-assessment:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A student assessing his- or herself - A teacher assessing his or herself
Non-verbal feedback:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Body language - Facial expressions - Tone of voice
Evaluative discussions:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Involves usually the teacher, the student and the guardian(s) of the student present

2.3 FEEDBACK AND LEARNING

As Hill and Flynn (2006) point out, when setting distinct goals and giving feedback to their students, teachers are able to guide the learning process, as well as provide one with proper information on development of the students. At the same time, they say that the goal-setting and the provision of feedback should not be too instructional, since teachers should also encourage students for independent learning.

It can be stated that assessment and learning ought to comprise a natural and genuine dialogue between each other. As Hongisto (2000: 86-87), however, points

out, assessment is usually guided by the actual conception of learning. For example, as Hongisto (2000: 86-90) presents, according to behaviourism, teaching and learning mainly consist of interaction where teacher or teaching materials convey information to a student. Consequently, she states that a so-called traditional evaluation, i.e. the evaluation of the work done, represents the behaviouristic conception of learning. Alternatively, she points out that constructivism emphasises students' active role during a learning process; learning depends on the surrounding environment, the nature of information conveyed, as well as students' previous knowledge. Thus, according to her, constructivism relies on the idea that learning is actually resulted in the interaction between the individual and the learning environment. Indeed, it can therefore be stated on the basis of the theory of constructivism that the interaction between a teacher and a student is significant for effective learning results.

According to Fisher (2011: 90), dialogic teaching can be regarded as "the kinds of talk that facilitate learning and stimulate thinking". Indeed, the dialogic viewpoint can be seen as an important part in the promotion of learning instead of teaching, in which the teacher is the main, leading figure (see. e.g. Fisher 2008; Mercer 2008). In consequence, in order to make the learning environment more pleasant, the various forms of teacher-to-student dialogue would seem to be necessary. What is more, Fisher (2011: 92) lists the different forms of talk and some of the following listings he considers to be noteworthy when constructing a dialogic learning environment:

- 1) instruction = giving directions to students
- 2) recitation = prompting students to activate with the given task
- 3) monologue = only one person speaking
- 4) conversation = speaking and listening, but only a little cognitive challenge is required
- 5) argument = contesting with one's own viewpoints
- 6) discussion = sharing of thoughts and problem-solving together (more demanding than conversational acts)
- 7) dialogue = examining and inquiring different phenomena in solidarity, where there is a chance for self-correction

As Fisher (2011: 92) points out, all of the aforementioned forms of talk have their time and place during a lessons, but more dialogic ways of teaching provide one with more cognitive challenges. Enabling the participation of students actively in teaching probably has a positive effect on how a student perceives the learning process as a whole.

In the Finnish school-context, the general notion for learning is based on the idea where the learning process is constructed via individual, as well as interactive activities and, furthermore, learning is defined to be dependent on “learners’ previous knowledge, motivation and learning practices” (POPS 2004: 18). Indeed, it seems rather apparent that the teacher has a significant role as the instructor of learning; the teaching practices, such as feedback-giving, undoubtedly have a great effect on the students’ outcome of learning and attitudes towards the taught subject.

The role of a teacher is significant in providing assessment that implies enlightening information and ideas, as well as challenges the students to broaden their understanding (Harlen 2010: 35). When efficient instruction and a relevant context are included in giving feedback, the effect of feedback is likely to become rather powerful and, consequently, it can be a major advantage for learning (Hattie and Timperley 2007).

According to Ihme (2009: 106), when the relationship between assessment and learning is considered, the most idealistic goal for feedback-giving would seem to be a situation where assessment can be seen as a medium of learning. In other words, she states that a learner truly benefits the given feedback and s/he therefore finds the situation pleasant. Probably, the learning process is, thus, likely to become more motivating.

2.3.1 Feedback and language learning

It seems rather obvious that in order to develop one's language skills, a social context is required. In consequence, the surrounding learning environment affects a great deal in L2 learning/acquisition (Sheen 2004).

Indeed, the presence of a target language user is vital to learn and enhance language-proficiency (Davies 2002: 49). Yliniemi et al. (2006) also studied how differing environments of foreign language use affect children's notions of learning the target language. The study showed that although, in particular, foreign language environments provide fruitful opportunities to use the target language, children also seem to emphasise the importance of interaction.

It seems rather vague whether there are specifically efficient ways for giving feedback affecting language learning, but, according to a study conducted by Butler and Lee (2010), self-assessment seemed, to some extent, to affect students' self-esteem, as well as foreign language learning beneficially. Furthermore, as Li (2010: 309-310) summarises, various recent studies have interested in exploring the usefulness of corrective feedback in L2 learning. He, however, reminds that when executing an empirical research on CF, one has to accurately take into account the different variables affecting the outcome of the effectiveness of CF. For example, age is one of the variables having an effect on the way how CF works – as it was aforementioned earlier (see s. 2.2.1).

Li (2010) conducted a meta-analysis on the effectiveness of corrective feedback, and the findings showed that explicit feedback was more efficient than implicit over a short-term L2 development. Implicit feedback, however, seemed to prove itself more convincing during a long-term development than explicit one. In consequence, it seems that both types of feedback ought to take into account when wanting to make the impact of feedback as significant as possible, but implicit feedback would seem to be more powerful in the long run. This can easily be justified with the fact that implicit feedback encourages students for

individual problem-solving and development of learning (see also Shute 2008, McGarrell and Verbeem 2007 and Gibbons 2003).

2.3.2 Relation to holistic learning

Assessment should initially and sincerely be based on supporting a student's learning and growth (see e.g. Ihme 2009). In addition, it is to be noted that learning can be regarded as a holistic and experiential process and, consequently, assessment inevitably has a significant impact on learning, too:

"All in all, assessment within an interaction aims at supporting a student's holistic learning."

(Törmä 2011: 122)

Indeed, Törmä (2011) argues on the basis of Kohonen's (1993) model where three different variables form a triangle for holistic learning: 1) the learner's self-concept, 2) the learner's notion of learning process and 3) the learner's notion of the learning task.

According to Kohonen (1993), when the learner is immersed and capable of exploring the aforementioned three dimensions, learning inevitably occurs, and, as Törmä (2011) emphasises, feedback in this connection has a considerable role in nourishing, as well as maintaining the whole development of learning. Since it can be considered that assessment aims at enhancing holistic learning, one has to contemplate closely what kinds of criteria are required and placed for the whole process (Koppinen et al. 1994: 117).

It should, however, be taken into account that the precise timing for giving feedback is crucial. Indeed, in order to actually benefit from it, students ought to receive feedback when they still have the opportunity to utilize it and strive for their goals. (Brookhart 2008: 10-11.) It, consequently, seems rather obvious that students are entitled to receive feedback throughout of their learning process.

3 ASSESSMENT

As stated earlier, it is rather self-evident that assessment is a vital part of the profession of a teacher. Every student is entitled to impartial and diverse assessment and the requisite standards are likely to provide teachers with challenges. In consequence, the following chapter concentrates on presenting the main ideology behind assessment at schools. In addition, since the present study is interested in examining interactional feedback, the inner focus of the chapter is formative assessment, which is reviewed in more detail.

Firstly, the nature of assessment is briefly defined, which is followed by the introduction of the concept of formative assessment. Alongside the description of formative assessment, the concept is linked to education. Then, the relationship between assessment and the development of one's self-concept is discussed. Lastly, the effects of assessment, as well as feedback-giving in particular, on the formation of classroom climate are reviewed.

The essence of assessment

As Koppinen et al. (1994: 8-9) point out, it is to be noted that assessment is highly likely to be present in every situation when the context of teaching and learning is considered. Thus, they emphasise that assessment aims at enhancing and supporting teaching and learning. They also note that the awareness of what and how something is assessed, consequently, enables developing education. As Ihme (2009: 85) states, the emphasis of assessment is on affecting positively the quality of a specific course of action. Simultaneously, she (2009: 89) wonders if assessment is apt to be a burden instead of learning aid at schools, since almost everything is presently assessed. Nevertheless, according to a Finnish curriculum of basic education, assessment in teaching has to be *diverse* and a *continuous process* (POPS 2004: 262, emphasis added).

As Koppinen et al. (1994: 25) argue, a teacher ought to think carefully how s/he justifies his or her practices of assessment; indeed, assessment and its

consequences have a great effect on students' future choices. They further point out that is why the teacher should take into account his or her conscious, unconscious and rationalized justifications for assessment. Furthermore, individualistic assessment has its focus on the learning process as a whole and it encourages the learner to achieve his or her personal goals (Ihme 2009: 41). Moreover, in order to gain a proper view of learners' comprehension, various and differing assessment methods are required (McMunn and Butler 2011).

In general, assessment can be divided into two categories: formative and summative, and the division is required since the two categories serve for different purposes (Black and Wiliam 2003). Formative assessment can be regarded as a continuous process alongside teaching and learning, whereas summative assessment concentrates on evaluating the result of the learning process – for example via course grades (Koppinen et al. 1994: 10).

According to Harlen and Gardner (2010: 18), the aims for formative and summative assessment can be considered rather dissimilar. Indeed, they (2010: 19-20) state that, in particular, formative assessment is highly multi-dimensional since it demands learner activity and, consequently, the participatory role of a learner enhances a wider development of learning. In turn, summative assessment, as they (2010: 22) argue, exclusively concentrates on measuring the final results of a learning process instead of paying attention to the learning process as a whole. In the light of the statement, it can, thus, be concluded that formative assessment is likely to support holistic learning more notably since its focus is on the entire process of development.

Alongside formative and summative assessment, it can be considered that the concept of assessment also includes a form of diagnostic assessment. Diagnostic assessment has its emphasis on mapping the learners' starting point, and the results of diagnostic assessment can, consequently, be utilized in planning teaching methods. (Koppinen et al. 1994: 10.) Since the present study is, however,

interested in interactive feedback, it concentrates solely on the aspects of formative assessment.

3.1 FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT

The main idea of formative assessment is to support and develop learning (Harlen and Gardner 2010: 16). Indeed, formative assessment aims at developing a learner's performance and individual thinking when the learning process is considered (Shute 2008; McGarrell and Verbeem 2007). Feedback based on formative assessment criteria can be described as content-based, rather than form-based, and individualized (McGarrell and Verbeem 2007). In other words, the formative assessment aims at supporting one's individual development in his or her learning and illustrating greater guidelines instead of focusing completely on details.

Furthermore, a teacher, having internalized the practices of formative assessment, usually takes an inquiring stance by asking questions and suggesting alternative solutions instead of criticizing immediately the performance of a learner (McGarrell and Verbeem 2007). Thus, the learner's self-esteem is less likely to suffer and the learning situation probably proves to be more motivating. Indeed, Gardner and Harlen (2010: 21-22), also point out that in order to benefit the advantages of formative assessment, a teacher needs to understand the actual purposes behind it instead of following the assessment practices machinelike.

Black and Wiliam (1998) presented five different teacher practices affecting the outcome of the process of formative assessment:

- 1) Choice of task; is the given task relevant when the goals of the learning process are taken into account?
- 2) Interaction between the teacher and the student
- 3) The quality of questions provided by the teacher
- 4) Frequent testing
- 5) The quality of feedback

In particular, they point out that the final of the five variables – the quality of feedback – is perhaps the most significant in formative assessment. Indeed, it seems obvious that by providing learners with efficient and context-relevant feedback, development in learning is highly likely to occur.

3.1.1 Interactive formative assessment

Hawe (2007) and Cowie and Bell (1999) introduce an idea of two different approaches in formative assessment that can be considered to complement each other: a planned and an interactive approach. Planned formative assessment concentrates on a student's level of performance, and that specific knowledge is, for example, reflected on the curriculum, as well as enhancing teaching methods. Interactive formative assessment is, in turn, spontaneous, present in every-day school-life and, consequently, a continuous process. (Hawe 2007: 325.) When the present study is considered, the focus is on interactive formative assessment here.

In order to accomplish and understand something new, one has to have certain goals for the pursuit of development, and the goal-setting can, thus, be considered vital from the viewpoint of assessment, as well (Graham 2010: 85). Indeed, it seems rather apparent that in order to manage to succeed in holistic assessment, one has to have defined the specific criteria the evaluation process demands.

Setting the sufficient goals for assessment is usually highly dependent on the teacher, but it is to be noted that interaction between the teacher and his or her students is crucial in order to reach consensus for the goals (Graham 2010: 86). Arter (2003: 476), for example, points out that when sincerely offering students a participatory role in planning the criteria for their assessment, the overall results in students' performance are often very positive. Indeed, Harlen (2010: 41) also emphasises that students have to be aware of the criteria of classroom assessment. In consequence, it appears that interaction has a powerful role in the world of feedback in general.

3.1.2 Formative assessment system

Frey and Fisher (2011) state that feedback as an element can be considered rather ineffective by itself. That is to say, they suggest that if giving feedback is harnessed as a part of the whole process of assessment – and according to some specific context – , the effect of feedback becomes powerful and significant. Indeed, Hattie and Timperley (2007) present a feedback model that comprises the idea of the actual, whole learning process. Due to the specific viewpoint, Frey and Fisher (2011) describe the model as *formative assessment system*. To clarify their model, Hattie and Timperley introduce three dimensions with guiding questions the purpose of which is to elucidate the idea for both people receiving and giving feedback:

- 1) Feed-up: Where am I going?
- 2) Feedback: How am I going?
- 3) Feed-forward: Where to next?

As concluded rather similarly earlier, it seems evident that learning and, consequently, assessment ought to be regarded as a continuous process. Moreover, according to Frey and Fisher (2011: 4), it is crucial to have all the three components, in other words the whole process, present when making an assessment, since only then learners are able to perceive what it is that is expected from them and what the actual purpose of the learning process is.

Indeed, it can be considered that feedback is usually no use if there is a little of understanding or background information of the on-going learning process, and that is why it can be analysed that the actual feedback becomes as a second dimension (*How am I going?*), since it “can only build on something” (Hattie and Timperley 2007). It is, however, to be taken into account that although the three aforementioned different dimensions are presented individually, they are usually integrated in teaching (Hattie and Timperley 2007).

3.2 ASSESSMENT AND SELF-CONCEPT

It is to be noted that effective teacher-to-student interaction promotes students' self-esteem, as well as the feeling of significance in a classroom (Reinke et al. 2011: 12). That is to say, students expect the feeling of security and support provided by the teacher (Burns 1982). Thus, it is rather self-evident that the teacher has a somewhat powerful role in student's identity construction.

Self-concept can roughly be considered to consist of two different elements: the self-image and self-esteem. The self-image comprises the notion of how an individual perceives oneself. In turn, self-esteem can be regarded as an individual's evaluation of his- or herself, in which the individual reflects his or her excellence on his or her personal attitudes and the perception of the surrounding world. (Burns 1982.)

The term *significant others* refers to people who are closely and regularly in interaction with an individual. Due to their vital and major role in one's life, self-concept is highly modified by significant others. (Burns 1982.) Indeed, it can be stated that, to some extent, a teacher is also numbered among them.

Assessment influences on how one's self-esteem is shaped. Thus, feedback ought to be precise and individualised in order to guide and encourage towards development. In addition, a learner has the right to be aware of the goals set for learning. (Koppinen et al. 1994: 117.) Nevertheless, it is to be noted that not only assessment shapes one's self-esteem, but at the same time one's prevailing perception of self affects how feedback is received (Koppinen et al. 1994: 115). Self-concept consequently has a circular influence on assessment.

According to Ihme (2009: 94), in order to affect one's self-concept positively, group- and self-assessment, evaluative discussions, as well as oral feedback are significant methods when the impact of assessment is considered. She further states that when providing feedback, a genuine and encouraging atmosphere ought to be emphasised. In addition, she (2009: 129) notes the aims and skills of

every individual ought to be taken into account when conducting assessment and, in consequence, one has the opportunity to proceed step by step towards his or her personal goals in different areas of learning.

It ought to be taken into account that positive experiences, such as positive feedback, have a strengthening influence on one's self-confidence (Törmä 2011: 124). Indeed, assessment can be considered as a process which inevitably evolves emotions. In order to support one's self-confidence, it should never position the person who is assessed in an embarrassing situation. (Koppinen 1994: 20.)

3.3 RELATION TO CLASSROOM CLIMATE

In the previous sections of this chapter, the various effects of assessment have been introduced. When the chapter 2 is also considered, it seems rather self-evident that feedback-giving, as well as assessment altogether, affects its receiver one way or another. However, it is worth acknowledging that in addition to the effects on an individual level, the ways of feedback probably interrelates with the atmosphere in a classroom. Since it can be argued that classroom climate stems from the teacher-to-student, as well as student-to-student interaction within a classroom, the development of atmosphere stems from the dialogues between different parties (see e.g. s 2.3; Fisher 2011; Hongisto 2000).

It is to be noted that in order to provide the students with profitable learning situations, the teacher has to actively facilitate and create a dialogue when the classroom interaction is considered (Hamre et al. 2012). What is more, the relationship between the teacher and the student can be regarded as significant, since the teacher has an effect on the holistic growth of an individual (Cefai and Cooper 2008: 56). It seems rather important that the teacher manages to create a pleasant and safe learning environment, and the right ways can be found when getting better acquainted with the students (Cefai and Cooper 2008: 58).

Indeed, Cefai and Cooper (2008) emphasise that it is relevant for the teacher to build solidarity with his or her students. They further argue that the teacher can have a noteworthy effect on the construction of teacher-student relationship by the means of assessment. For example, they (2008: 63) point out that when giving feedback is considered, the usage of emoticons make the students feel themselves more significant. They (2008: 65) also emphasise the acts of reciprocity and empathy. It can be stated that the aforementioned factors can be considered to be connected to giving feedback. That is to say, when one listens and creates a dialogue with another person, s/he needs to be ready to react in the situation and, in a manner of speaking, the reactions can be regarded as a certain form of feedback.

4 L2 ENGLISH AS A SCHOOL SUBJECT

During the past few decades, English has acquired a powerful and dominant position all over the world, and it can therefore be regarded as a *lingua franca*² (see e.g. Leppänen et al. 2008; Seidlhofer 2005). The major rise of English can also be seen in Finland and, thus, the phenomenon has undoubtedly affected teaching of English, as well.

The following chapter concentrates on observing the practices of an English classroom - and L2 English, in particular - from both universal and Finnish viewpoint. In the first section, the general position of English is, however, discussed.

4.1 THE GENERAL ROLE OF ENGLISH IN FINLAND

As Leppänen et al. (2008: 13, 20) point out, one of the major reasons for the rapid expansion of English during the past few decades is the cultural globalisation. Various channels of media, such as TV, popular music, electronic games, as well

² *Lingua franca* refers to a certain, mutual language within a community. For example, English is often used as a *lingua franca* in international gatherings or business meetings.

as the Internet and its forums spread cultural trends and solidarity – and, usually, they are in English. They also emphasise that in the Finnish context the usage of English has remarkably increased since the 1960's and, as an example, English expressions have become noticeably general in youth media and advertising.

Unlike in many other European countries, people in Finland are exposed to English a great deal via movies and TV-series since they are not often dubbed. The major exposure has very likely affected people's personal attitudes to English language. What is more, it seems very probable that, for example, TV and the Internet usually provide one with informal learning contexts of English, and it is accordingly unavoidable that even younger people also confront English in their everyday-lives in most varying contexts. (Leppänen et al. 2008: 13, 20.)

Finnish children are, in particular, exposed to English via different language usage situations where the target language is Finnish but various English elements are present. Usually, the elements are only single words or phrases and can, for instance, be identified in video games or youth radio programs. (Leppänen et al. 2008: 24.) Consequently, since English has a central role in the constant expanding world of youth culture, English language has an almost equal role beside Finnish strengthening unanimity and identity construction. The phenomenon is, for example, seen via the situations of code switching in playing video games. (Leppänen et al. 2008: 163.)

4.2 NATURE OF THE SUBJECT

When a foreign language is taught as a school subject, it is seen and examined differently compared to the way how the native speakers of that language experience it. Furthermore, although the language taught in a classroom is usually seen detached from its authentic environment, the role of a language as a school subject somewhat requires it. Some incentives from the real world are, however, needed in order to make the learning process motivating. That is to say,

the teacher has to be able to plan and arrange an interesting teaching scenario, which, more often than not, demands creativity. (Widdowson 2002: 68, 78.)

According to Widdowson (2002: 80), language teachers, should regard the language being taught as a subject than an object. In other words, the language ought to be seen as a phenomenon itself rather than a medium of conveying a message. Nevertheless, the viewpoint supports the stereotypical and perhaps slightly negative idea that foreign language teaching has its emphasis too much on vocabulary and grammatical structures. At the same time, it is, however, to be noted that in order to be able to teach the target language properly, as well as give constructive feedback, the teacher has to truly comprehend how the language works (Hill and Flynn 2006).

Indeed, the general notion seems to be that second language classrooms are mainly based on form-focused instruction (Mackey 2006). That is to say, there has been some criticism on how the great deal of foreign language teaching generally concentrates on grammar and reading comprehension. In addition, if a language class has its concentration on form rather than meaning, it conclusively implies that the assessment of learning process is also more form-focused.

4.2.1 English in a Finnish school context

The majority of Finnish people start studying English as their second language (L2). In that case, English usually starts in the 3rd grade at the age of 8 or 9. In a Finnish school context the emphasis on L2 language teaching is on the following three areas of language use: language proficiency, cultural knowledge and learning strategies (POPS 2004: 139). Indeed, the teaching concentrates on conveying the knowledge and sufficient skills for *communicative competence*³.

³ The term communicative competence can be regarded as some kind of an indicator, measuring one's language skills.

4.2.2 L2 and assessment

Providing feedback is an essential part of language teaching (Wong and Waring 2009). Teachers utilize various means how to enhance the learners' English skills. For instance, teachers tend to give a specific signal when one has to reformulate something and, also, imply the actual need for it – expecting students, however, to solve the problem by themselves (Gibbons 2003: 257-267).

Various researchers studying L2 acquisition emphasise the role of interactional feedback in the development of a second language. At the same time, it is, however, assumed that even if a learner provided a non-target like production, s/he would notice – and even acquire – the correct L2 form in interaction. (Mackey 2006.) In consequence, it seems rather apparent that the role of a teacher is significant here. Mackey (2006) found, on the basis of her study in two ESL higher level classrooms, that interactional feedback does seem to be related in learners' noticing of L2 forms.

In Finnish primary schools, becoming aware of different learning strategies in L2 teaching – for example, one being capable of choosing the most suitable learning method when one's personal needs and goals are taken into account – is one of the key areas that are emphasised in teaching. Furthermore, one of the learning strategies is accordingly to make the learner able to evaluate his or her learning and identify his or her strengths, as well as weaknesses as a language user. (POPS 2004: 139-140.) In consequence, learners are encouraged to self-evaluation instead of the teaching being only teacher-to-student assessment.

One rather common way of praising students in EFL classroom is the phrase 'very good'. As Wong and Waring (2009) suggest, the phrase ought to, however, be used rather sparingly. Indeed, they argue that the phrase may be over-used, as well as it may indicate the students that the task is completed and, consequently, it may inhibit the willingness to ask any further questions of the task. Furthermore, they emphasise that the praising feedback ought to be as sincere as possible, rather than repetitious and clichéd phrases.

The present study is specifically interested in studying interactive feedback in primary schools. Various studies concerning the effectiveness of feedback tend to have its focus on higher education but, for example, according to a study conducted by Mackey and Oliver (2002), feedback in interaction truly seems to assist the progress of L2 development among children. Furthermore, they further found out that children benefitted significantly of interactional feedback compared to adult ESL learners. They reckoned this may be due to the fact that feedback provided to children reminded a great deal of the talk of care-takers and, consequently, children seem to be somewhat used to it.

5 INTERACTION IN A LANGUAGE CLASSROOM

What seems evident is that learning and teaching at schools are based on interaction – even when reading because then the learner in a way interacts with the writer of the text (Aro 2006: 57). In consequence, it can be considered that the learner is in constant interaction during his or her learning process. Furthermore, although the definition of classroom talk could be simplified as “utterances produced by individual speakers as acts of volition”, it is, in fact, a more dynamic and multi-dimensional social situation. (Leung and Mohan 2004: 339.)

Pedagogical actions and interaction have a tight connection with each other. Nevertheless, the connection can be considered somewhat intricate (Seedhouse 2010). Indeed, the interaction in a classroom consists of several constantly changing variables. As an example, when teaching languages is considered, there can be identified two different kinds of pedagogical approaches; the actual pedagogy and the intended pedagogy. In other words, due to varying and unexpected situations, the interaction in a classroom may suddenly differ drastically from planned. (Seedhouse 2010.)

5.1 SINCLAIR AND COULTHARD'S IRF -PATTERN

Sinclair and Coulthard (1975) presented a model for teacher-initiated interaction within a classroom. They suggest that classroom interaction consists of a series of different kinds of acts. Indeed, according to the approach the acts are usually started by the teacher. They also propose that the most common interactive acts follow a certain pattern comprising the three following moves:

- 1) I = an initiative; usually made by the teacher
- 2) R = a respond; the student reacting to the teacher's initiating move
- 3) F = feedback; provided by the teacher to the student on the basis of the respond

According to Cullen (2002: 122), when a teacher-initiated classroom interaction is considered, the teacher, however, has to make a decision what kind of information the follow-up includes; in other words, if s/he decides to provide solely evaluative follow-ups, the interaction may remain very superficial. On the contrary, if the teacher provides interactive follow-ups, students may not receive proper information on their errors, and, consequently, teachers have to carefully think what the balance between these two follow-ups is in their classrooms (Cullen 2002: 122). It is to be noted that the usage of certain follow-ups can vary a great deal depending on every lesson (Cullen 2002: 122).

It is to be noted that IRF-pattern depicts the interaction in a classroom in general. In consequence, the certain characteristics for language learning are not actually taken into consideration here. For example, it ought to be taken into account that when the aspect of learning to produce a language is considered, the IRF-pattern should not be applied in all cases. In other words, learning to use and speak a language demands more spontaneous communication than one-way interaction.

5.2 MODELS FOR LANGUAGE CLASSROOM INTERACTION

The ways of interaction in language classrooms have been discussed for several decades. However, the actual trend for studying classroom developed in 1960's -

mainly due to the development of data gathering methods, such as videotaping (Seedhouse 2010). The following subsections present popular models for interaction in a language classroom. Both models is discussed and reviewed briefly.

5.2.1 Communicative Orientation of Language Teaching

There have been constructed different models for examining conventions in a L2 classroom, and one of them presents a rather universal and extensive viewpoint. *Communicative Orientation of Language Teaching (COLT) observation scheme* was represented by Spada and Fröhlich in 1995. In general, the model has been used to examine, for example, classroom interaction and learners' progress in language learning. The model has also been utilised to help the teachers to reflect and challenge their own teaching methods. (Spada and Lyster 1997; 787-788.)

It is to be noted that since no observation scheme is able to depict all implications in a language classroom, COLT cannot be considered completely valid. For example, the scheme has its focus more on instructed patterns in a classroom rather than spontaneous interaction. (Bacon 1997.) In consequence, the genuine social intercourse may escape one's attention.

5.2.2 Communicative Language Teaching

A theory called *communicative language teaching (CLT)* consist of both learning processes and aims in a language classroom. Thus, a term communicative competence can be considered the main corner stone of the theory. Indeed, the target of CLT is to provide a learner with elaborate and practical learning methods enhancing one's language skills. Moreover, since the CLT clearly has its emphasis on the learner, the theory highly supports formative assessment based on qualitative criteria. (Savignon 2002: 1, 4; Savignon 1987.) In spite of the pioneering theory of communicative language teaching, it seems that the active use of these kinds of teaching methods is rather rare (Sato 2002: 41). ELT teachers should,

however, concentrate on enhancing the performance of students by providing more learner-centred activities (Pugazhenthii 2012).

The main idea behind CLT is that the language provided ought to be as authentic as possible. In other words, the target language functions as medium of communication instead of being in the spotlight of learning process. Consequently, “fluency is more important than accuracy”. (Pugazhenthii, 2012.) It, thus, seems rather apparent that the main focus of CLT is on meaning-focused teaching rather than form-focused teaching. Moreover, since the emphasis is on communicative competence than grammatical structures, CLT can be seen a modern model for language teaching.

6 ATTITUDES IN LANGUAGE LEARNING

Several researchers have provided various definitions for the term *attitudes*. Many of them, however, emphasise that the concept can be seen as an evaluative stance against some phenomenon or issue. (Bartram 2010.) As an example, the concept of attitudes can be described as follows:

“an evaluative reaction to some referent or attitude object, inferred on the basis of the individual’s beliefs or opinions about the referent”.

(Gardner 1985: 9)

Approximately, attitudes can be regarded as a way of explaining human behaviour in differing situations. However, attitudes can also be seen as latent, since not always can one’s feelings and thoughts be recognised. (Baker 1992.)

As Baker (1992: 10) argues, the fact how one individually perceives a specific language can easily be concluded by exploring one’s attitudes towards the language. He further states that although attitudes can be measured at a personal level, it is also possible to map the attitudes of a certain group of people.

Indeed, this chapter concentrates on attitudes as a complex and diverse phenomenon. Firstly, the connection between attitudes and motivation is briefly discussed. Secondly, the general notion of the formation of attitudes is presented. Then the influence of attitudes on L2 English is considered and the general attitudes of children towards English are presented, in particular. Finally, the relationship between attitudes and assessment is examined.

6.1 RELATION TO MOTIVATION

When language learning is considered, the concept of attitudes and motivation - as well as their relation to learning - are usually discussed in tandem. Indeed, these two concepts seem to have a tight correlation. That is to say, the attitudes seem to influence the motivation by modifying it one way or another. As an example, Dörnyei (2001: 20) points out that one of the main questions concerning motivation is what determines and shapes one's innate motivation, rather than what actually motivates the learner. In consequence, it seems rather obvious that even if some specific topic were, for example, presented in an interesting way but one's attitudes towards the topic would be negative, a person might not be motivated by the topic.

Aunola (2002: 109) presents the idea of intrinsic motivation, meaning that an actual action or phenomenon has a significant magnitude which motivates an individual. This concept refers to a self-rewarding process without any external incentives, which means that if one has positive attitudes to a specific topic, one's personal, positive experiences motivate a person instead of some external rewards, such as grades at school. In the light of the present study, the influence of attitudes is noteworthy here.

The influence of assessment on attitudes and motivation seems rather evident. For example, as McMunn and Butler (2011: 159) indicate, when assessment is provided at school, the following three factors are highly likely to influence students' learning motivation: 1) student involvement, 2) choosing the most

suitable assessment methods for different learning situations and 3) using assessment practices that will encourage and support the learner. On the basis of the aforementioned notions, it can be concluded that, to some extent, learning motivation is dependent on classroom interaction and the contributions of a teacher to assessment.

6.2 THE FORMATION OF ATTITUDES

According to Bohner and Wänke (2002: 76), attitudes can be shaped by different external influences, and when exposure to a certain object or phenomenon becomes more frequent, the impact of attitudes, and usually liking in particular, towards that specific object or phenomenon increases. They further point out that, for example, when one is exposed to a certain song very often, the frequent exposure may increase one's positive attitudes to that specific song.

All in all, the attitude formation is dependent on three different viewpoints, which influence the nature of attitudes: cognitive responses, affective responses and conative responses (Baker 1992; Bartram 2010). The cognitive response involves general thoughts and beliefs, the affective response relates to one's individual feelings towards the target of attitudes and conative response concerns one's willingness to perform a certain action on the basis of his or her attitudes. For example, in Finland the knowledge of English is generally considered very beneficial (cognitive) although some people may find English difficult (affective). However, the majority of Finns starts learning English in elementary school because of its usefulness (conative).

It also seems self-evident that a teacher affects the formation of attitudes of his or her students. For example, teaching practices used in a classroom can have an impact on students' attitude formation. It should, however, be taken into account that each learner has individual opinions on what kinds of teaching methods s/he prefers. (Bartram 2010: 43, 45.) From the viewpoint of the present study, specific methods for giving feedback can be defined as certain kinds of teaching

methods. In consequence, the latter notion of the influence of a teacher can be applied to assessment at schools, as well.

6.3 ATTITUDES AND L2 ENGLISH

The formation of language learners' different personal perceptions are primarily analysed via two approaches; the perceptions are either seen as scarcely interchangeable or capable of being modified in interaction (Aro 2006: 56). Furthermore, Bakhtin (1986) presents an idea of dialogic approach stating that all knowledge one gains is based on interaction between the surrounding people and environment. According to the notion of perceptions being modified within an interaction, as well as the Bakhtinian view, it consequently seems obvious that the surrounding environment has an impact on learners' attitudes towards some specific language.

A study that explored German and Dutch students' attitudes towards English showed that students seem to be aware of the global usefulness of English and, therefore, they considered the proficiency of English important. Moreover, regardless of the global status of English, students found English 'enjoyable' and 'relatively easy'. (Bartram 2010: 143-145.) It is, however, fairly interesting why many students become eventually to form negative attitudes towards school – and some specific subjects, in particular (Heining-Boynton and Haitema 2007: 152). Indeed, it seems fairly interesting how the attitudes can change rather drastically, regardless of the fact that they had earlier showed greater interest in studying and learning.

Heining-Boynton and Haitema (2007) studied foreign language learners' attitudes towards the target language and, particularly, the language as a school-subject. The study depicts a ten-year chronicle, where at first the attitudes of students were examined at elementary school level and later at high school level. The findings of the study showed that general attitudes towards foreign languages declined as the learners became more advanced. That is to say, the

more proficient level they achieved, the less motivating they found language learning. Furthermore, according to the results, teachers seemed to have a major impact on the formation of attitudes.

Rather similarly, Wright (1999) conducted a study examining British learners' attitudes towards French and French culture. The most significant finding of the study was that instead of any external incentives, a teacher seemed to be one of the most influential factors having an effect on students' attitudes towards French as a language. The previous research results on the impact of a teacher are important, since the present study has its emphasis on the role of a teacher.

Children's general attitudes towards English

In general, it seems that children studying English as L2 or as EFL⁴, have rather positive attitudes towards it. Due to the rapid world-wide expansion of English, even younger people seem to encounter English in their lives (see e.g. Leppänen et al. 2008).

Aro (2009) conducted a longitudinal case study on 7-12 year-old Finnish L1 elementary school children's beliefs about English and the learning of English language. It appeared that one of the main motives for studying English seemed to be that English is needed in foreign countries and when speaking with the native speakers. Furthermore, the children also seemed to understand the dominance of English and that it can often be used as a lingua franca in different situations (Aro 2009: 91-92). Although the children shared their own personal purposes for studying English, a various number of motives concerned adulthood, as well as working life and its needs. Consequently, the children were rather seldom able to see a link between the motive of studying English and the constant appearance of English in their everyday recreational activities (Aro 2009: 110-111). As an example, some of the children tended to comprehend the overall usefulness of English and its actual usage as somewhat different matters,

⁴ EFL = English as a foreign language.

because it seemed that they could not properly explain a more significant reason for using English on the basis of their personal motives (see e.g. Aro 2009: 81).

Chunga and Huangb (2010) studied Taiwanese elementary school students' attitudes towards the learning of English. The study presented the concept of integrative motivation, which means the willingness to learn the target language in order to integrate and become part of the speech community. Indeed, the integrative motivation seemed to be one of the most apparent factors when asking the participants about the attitudes. In consequence, the students seemed to be rather motivated to learning English because one often encounters the language during leisure-time. As an example, the study showed that since children reported to encounter English in many contexts, they realised its value as a tool and, thus, regarded the knowledge of English as beneficial.

6.4 ATTITUDES AND ASSESSMENT

Feedback can truly have an enormous impact on its receiver. Indeed, according to Brookhart (2008: 2), the significant influence of formative feedback stems from its dualistic approach where both cognitive and motivational factors are present; in other words, students are simultaneously able to understand where they actually are in their learning and have the feeling of having control over their learning. For example, Harlen (2010: 41) argues that, in particular, formative assessment ought to encourage and guide in the development of learning - in order to make the learning process motivating.

It is suggested that if feedback merely concentrates on learner as a person, it may, more often than not, have a negative impact on the actual learning process. Indeed, it ought to be emphasised that assessment has its focus on the performance and development of a learner instead of s/he as an individual. Consequently, self-esteem and motivation, as well as attitudes are usually strengthened if feedback truly concentrates on the aforementioned factors, rather than, for example, assessment based on summative criteria. That is to say,

summative assessment is usually solely based on conveying information only on whether a learner has failed or succeeded. (Nicol and Macfarlane-Dick 2006; Black and Wiliam 1998.)

Harlen (2010: 33) states that, more importantly, instead of providing students with a great deal of knowledge of a specific subject, assessment should have its focus on developing understanding and attitudes which are relevant these days. In other words, learners ought to provide the opportunity to understand the surrounding society and world. What is more, when language learning is considered, the teacher should concentrate on enhancing students' attitudes towards foreign languages, since the world is getting smaller every day.

Zacharias (2007) conducted a study on students' attitudes towards feedback provided by teachers. The findings showed that the majority of students found teacher feedback significant and, in particular, students who had challenges in their learning considered feedback noticeably supportive. The finding supports the studies on attitudes showing that the teacher has a noteworthy effect on how students perceive the taught subject, and the whole learning process.

7 THE PRESENT STUDY

This chapter focuses on the present study. Firstly, the purpose of the present study is explained and the research questions are presented. The nature of the present study and the participants are introduced. Then, the actual methods for gathering and analysing the data are discussed. Finally, the reliability, as well as the validity of the study is evaluated.

7.1 THE PURPOSE OF THE PRESENT STUDY

Although interactive feedback in language classrooms has been studied to some extent, the studies have mainly focused on a rather structured set of actions. For example, many researchers have specifically been interested in the use of

corrective feedback (e.g. Ammar and Spada 2006; Panova and Lyster 2002; Lyster and Ranta 1997) instead of examining the whole spectrum of interactive methods for giving feedback. Furthermore, Sinclair and Coulthard's (1975) model for teacher-to-student interaction illustrates a specific, but rather stereotypical image of classroom interaction. Thus, one aim of the present study is to denote and strengthen the idea of more diverse teacher-to-student interaction.

In turn, the attitudes towards foreign language and foreign language learning are studied moderately (e.g. Bartram 2010; Gardner and Lambert 1972), but there is little research on the influence of assessment on one's attitudes. However, the impact of teacher assessment on students' attitudes towards a certain phenomenon or issue - in this case English as a language - can evidently be considered rather valuable. Indeed, when taking into consideration studies that showed how the teacher had a deteriorating impact on learners' attitudes (see e.g. Heining-Boynton and Haitema 2007; Wright 1999), it implies the power of the role of a teacher.

All in all, the main focus of the data analysis is to investigate the occurrence and varying means of interactive feedback in English classes, as well as its relation to children's attitudes towards English. Consequently, on the basis of the gathered data, the present study aims at answering the following:

- 1) What kinds of different forms of teacher-to-student feedback in interaction are there in English classes at primary school?
- 2) What is the relationship between teacher-to-student feedback in interaction and learners' personal attitudes towards English as a language?

Since it can be considered that "good teaching is based on thorough and tested knowledge about what does and does not work" (Elton-Chalcraft et al. 2008: 3), the present study consequently intends to provide teachers with tools on what kinds of interactive feedback methods possibly have a positive effect on students' attitudes.

7.2 THE NATURE OF THE STUDY AND THE PARTICIPANTS

The present study is a case-study which is constructed by examining the research frame at two different levels. The analysis on the first level leans on the first research question and the focus is on the activity and, particularly, teacher-to-student feedback during an actual lessons. In consequence, the teachers can be regarded as the cases here, and their activity is observed on English lessons (see s. 7.3.3). On the second level, when in turn relying on the second research question, the emphasis is on the notions and attitudes of students. Thus, the cases are considered to be the students, and their viewpoints are studied via a questionnaire and interviews (see s. 7.2.1 and 7.2.2.).

The participants of the study consisted of two primary school teachers, and their two English classes, as well as one English subject teacher and her class. The target classes were two 5th grades and one 4th grade. The reason why the participants represented that specific age-scale was that they already had some knowledge of English and, consequently, the participants were assumed to be somewhat able to describe and illustrate their personal views on English, as well as their attitudes towards it.

7.3 THE METHODOLOGY

The method for gathering the data consisted of *triangulation*. The main idea behind the triangulation is the researcher needs to waive his or her subjective preconceptions because the phenomenon is studied at several different levels (Tuomi and Sarajärvi 2009: 141). From the viewpoint of the present study, it can be considered that methodological triangulation was utilised. In other words, three rather different ways for data-gathering were utilized; a questionnaire, a semi-structured interview and an observation. The reason for choosing the aforementioned three methods was to give as wide understanding as possible of the studied phenomenon. In other words, due to the qualitative character of the

present study, it was important to depict the different levels in classroom interaction from the viewpoint of more than few persons.

The actual analysis of the data was constructed by making interpretations and drawing conclusions on the basis of the questionnaire, videotaped lessons, as well as the interviews. It is to be noted that the theoretical framework also guided the interpretation process. In this paper, the analysis of the present study is divided into two different sections; chapters 8 and 9. The chapter eight concentrates on analysing the observed, videotaped English lessons and the 9th chapter has its emphasis on the questionnaires and the interviews of the students.

7.3.1 The questionnaires

Firstly, each class was given a questionnaire, the purpose of which was to map children's general attitudes and thoughts about English as a language and English as a school-subject. In order to avoid the possibility of leading questions as much as possible, the questions were constructed at a rather general level and open-ended. Consequently, the inner purpose of the questions was to map the actual viewpoints concerning the attitudes of English as a language, as well as studying it (see the format for the questionnaire in the appendix 1).

The children were given approximately ten minutes answer the questions in the questionnaire. The time-limit was chosen on the basis of the type of the open-ended questions, as well as the age of the respondents. In other words, the main point was to give the respondents enough time to answer the questions as thoroughly as possible, but at the same time it was important to make sure that the answers were based on children's real, immediate feelings.

The answers were analysed by going them through thoroughly one question at a time. On the basis of the given answers, four different categories were found considering the viewpoints of children:

- 1) Overall opinions of English in a school context

- 2) Description of English as a language
- 3) Personal feelings about studying English
- 4) Notions of their own English teachers

After the aforementioned categorisation, each category was examined more closely. At this point, strictly polarised views were distinguished from each other. For example, when the third category - one's personal feelings about studying English - was considered, the purpose of the analyses was to find drastically differing viewpoints.

7.3.2 The observation

Each class was observed for three hours making it total of nine hours of observation. In order to have gained as specific data as possible, the observed lessons were videotaped and transcribed, as well. Indeed, the videotaping enabled the return to the teaching situation and it accordingly provided an opportunity for more in-depth analysis (Hopkins 2008: 115-116). However, it ought to be remembered that one should not make judgements or generalisations too hastily on behaviour of an individual (Hopkins 2008: 75).

It is to be noted that when observing the lessons and later analysing the data, the actual aim of the present study has to be taken into consideration. Since the aim of the observation was consequently to examine interactive teacher-to-student feedback, its focus could be classified as specific instead of general observations of an English lesson. (Hopkins 2008: 76.) According to Grönfors (2001), observation may help linking meanings and notions better together and with the prevailing knowledge. He also points out that observation may provide one with more diverse outlook on the studied matter and the studied phenomenon is more easily seen in its natural environment. The reason for choosing observation for one research method was the fact that it provides one with significant information on the actual interaction and activities during lessons.

The analysis of the observed lessons was constructed on the bases of the research question number one: What kinds of different forms of teacher-to-student

feedback in interaction are there in English classes at primary school? Indeed, the focus on examining the practices of a teacher was consequently comprised of interpretations that were considered to be significant, as well as supporting the concept of different kinds of teacher-to-student feedback in interaction. For example, notions that could be interpreted to be a part of one of the following categories were analysed more thoroughly (see also s. 2.2.1):

- 1) Teacher praise
- 2) Corrective feedback
- 3) Teacher's expectations
- 4) Individualised feedback

Although the observed lessons were videotaped in order to be able to return afterwards to the situations, written notions of distinct situations, where teacher-to-student feedback was utilised, were also made during the observation. In consequence, it was easier to refresh memory when starting to actually analyse the collected data.

The teachers' ways for giving feedback were categorised separately by utilising the aforementioned criteria. On the basis of the interpretations, three narratives, where every teacher is discussed as an individual case, were created. The three narratives were constructed by highlighting personal, unique practices of each teacher, which seemed to jump out. The practices are named with clarifying, narrative-like subtitles in the following chapter 8 to point out the emphasis on the findings. What is more, in order to deepen the understanding of the findings, several, transcribed extracts were chosen to support the analysis.

Since the goals of the narratives are to outline different kinds of methods for giving teacher-to-student feedback, as well as pointing out how student-centred teaching can be put into practice in different ways, the exemplifying extracts were chosen in order to expand the view. In other words, teaching can be considered to be a field where one admittedly works with his or her personality and, in

consequence, the extracts are meant for giving a glimpse on teaching from three different points of view.

7.3.3 The interviews

On the basis of the questionnaire, two children from each class were chosen for an interview in order to gain more in-depth analysis. There was, consequently, an opportunity to ask clarifications, as well as get more specific and personal justifications for the given answers in the questionnaire. The aim was to select individuals who have the most drastic opinions; in other words, the idea is to interview – from each class – two children who represent strikingly positive and two children who have thought-provoking negative thoughts about English. The interviews were naturally recorded in order to gain a more thorough analysis.

The interview of the present study was constructed on the basis of a format of a semi-structured interview. The purpose was to ask questions of certain themes on the bases of the questionnaire. Nevertheless, one had to be prepared to abide by the situation and, for example, inquire information if necessary. Tuomi and Sarajärvi (2009: 75) emphasise that the requirements for a very consistent pattern of an interview are totally dependent on the prevailing context and, thus, there does not exist a certain rule whether the questions should be performed in a specific order. It is, however, important to notice that the aim is to find valid answers that will support the original purpose of the present study (Tuomi and Sarajärvi 2002: 75). Thus, despite the flexibility of a situation, one needs to think carefully what s/he would like to ask. Basically, anything that can be considered relevant for gaining sufficient answers in relation to the research questions can have an impact on the findings.

Rather similarly, as the analyses of the answers in the questionnaire, the interviews were analysed via categorising the themes according to following the questions, which were basically the same in the actual interview:

- 1) What is your general opinion of English as a school-subject?

- 2) What are the pros and cons during English lessons?
- 5) What kind of an atmosphere is there during your English class?
- 6) What is your English teacher like?
- 7) If you think about English as a school-subject and yourself, what kinds of thoughts come into your mind?

On the basis of the transcribed answers, interpretations were made and students of each teacher were analysed separately. The separate analysis were made in order to make harmonious unities that complete the findings of answers of the questionnaire and observations.

7.3 THE RELIABILITY AND VALIDITY

In this subsection the reliability and validity of the present study are discussed. When the topic, as well as the gathered data of the present study are considered, the following aspects are analysed: *credibility, generalisation, ethical aspect, feasibility and own experiences.*

Credibility and generalisation

Classroom interaction, as well as assessment can be considered to be a part teacher's everyday work. Consequently, when studying the ways for feedback-giving, one can perhaps have a better understanding of the practices of a teacher via the findings of the present study.

Since the method for gathering data consisted of triangulation, the method can be considered to be rather wide. In other words, instead of one method, three varying methods were utilised. Furthermore, both observation and the interviews concentrated on different viewpoints, meaning both teachers and students were studied. However, the interviews probed into the personal conceptions and notions of a student, whereas the observations only pointed out the actions and practices of a teacher. In consequence, the personal opinions of teachers are not in the centre in the present study. It is to be noted that, at the same time, the focus of the study was on teachers' actions and students' attitude-

formation. Consequently, the three methods were found to be the most suitable attaining the goals of the present study.

If the viewpoint of saturation is considered, the answers given in the questionnaires and in the interviews eventually started repeating each other. By saturation is meant a situation in a research when new findings fail to convey any new information and, consequently, the phenomenon starts to repeat itself (Tuomi and Sarajärvi 2009: 89). However, at the same time, it ought to be taken into account that also the age of participants may have had an impact on the general style of answering, or the question phrasing could have been better. On the other hand, it can be considered that the personal perceptions of children are also valuable when studies in school contexts are carried out. Thus, it is significant to study school-related phenomena from the viewpoint of different age groups.

Ethical aspects

When conducting a study concerning children, it is crucial to take the ethical aspects carefully into account. For example, one has to consider if the data-gathering methods are suitable for the situation and truly related to the research questions. Furthermore, it is important to ensure that all the required consents and permissions are valid, as well as to know which information is considered confidential. (Elton-Chalcraft et al. 2008: 57.)

Feasibility

The purpose of the present study is to provide one with information on the studied phenomenon. Since the aspect of assessment, as well as feedback-giving can be regarded as an essential part of the profession of a teacher, the present study attempts to give a wider perspective that can possibly be applied to the field of teaching, as well as teacher training. For example, the present study aims at finding links between interactive feedback and students' attitude-formation. Also, the aim of the study is to provide one with more extensive knowledge of the general attitudes of English amongst children in Finland.

My own experience

I can say that the research topic is personally really significant to me, and as a teacher-to-be I feel that assessment is one of the most challenging duties when the professions of a teacher is considered. At the same time, assessment and feedback-giving are a part of every moment, every day at school. When I started my research process I was really excited and motivated and still I recognise the importance of the topic. According to Tuomi and Sarajärvi (2009: 135), one of the indicators for the reliability of the study is what the personal stance of a researcher towards the studied matter has been throughout the project.

8 FEEDBACK IN INTERACTION DURING AN ENGLISH CLASS

Here, in the first section of the analysis, the different methods of giving oral feedback in each observed class is introduced individually in the following section. The conclusions and a summary are drawn on the basis of the analysed, videotaped data at the end of the section. The lessons of each teacher are presented separately in order to be able to examine more closely the conventions and individual pedagogical approaches of each teacher. However, honouring the privacy of the teachers, the narrative point of view in the analysis is constructed by using pseudonyms.

It is to be noted that the purpose of the present study is not to criticise or judge, as well as compare the teachers and their methods to each other. Rather, the main purpose is to explore the differences with a great interest in order to expand the outlook on how interactive, student-centred teaching can be put into practice – and how the teachers can benefit with it when executing different methods in their teaching.

8.1 HANNA - WARMTH AND GOOD LAUGHS

Hanna is a class teacher for 4th graders and, alongside other subjects, also teaches English to her pupils. One of the dominant factors in the classroom atmosphere is the prevailing warmth. Indeed, there is a great deal of warm laughter in the classroom, and even though observing an ongoing English class as a bystander, the positive and joyous atmosphere is almost tangible.

8.1.1 Constructing a sincere atmosphere

Hanna has obviously constructed a close and warm relationship with her students where it was easy for every individual to point out notions and ideas. As an example, when moving on to a new topic, she allowed the students to wonder and observe, as well as use their imagination to adjust to the incoming information. Surprisingly, Carnell (2000: 47, 50) points out that students do not always seem to recognise the spontaneous interaction with a teacher to be a normal convention at school, but Hanna has clearly managed create a safe and spontaneous learning environment. In the following excerpt, it can be seen how she encourages the children to interpret a picture in an English textbook, related to the chapter that is determined to be studied next:

(1) Hanna: Okay, what do you see in the picture? Can you tell me, where we are in the picture and what is actually happening?

(A student raises his hand and Hanna allows him to answer with a nod.)

Student 1: At the mall.

Hanna: Yep, that's where we're at. What do you see in the picture?

(Another student raises their hand and Hanna grants a turn by calling the student by their name.)

Student 2: There are people in the escalator at least and that one shop has the sales going on.

Hanna: Yep, very good.

(Hanna gives a turn to the third student raising his hand.)

Student 3: Well, that one guy has a quite sad face.

Hanna (laughing): Well, you're right about that! That's sad. But you have clearly made some accurate observations there!

(1) Hanna: Okei, mitäs kaikkea näätte kuvassa? Osaatteko kertoa, missä me ollaan tässä kuvassa ja mitä oikeen tapahtuu?

(Oppilas viittaa ja Hanna myöntää puheenvuoron nyökkäämällä.)

Oppilas 1: Kauppakeskuksessa.

Hanna: Kyllä, siellähän me ollaan. Mitä kaikkea näätte kuvassa?

(Toinen oppilas viittaa ja Hanna antaa puheenvuoron kutsumalla oppilasta nimeltä.)

*Oppilas 2: Ihmisiä on ainaki liukuportaissa ja sit tossa yhdessä kaupassa on joku ale.
 Hanna: Jep, tosi hyvä.
 (Hanna antaa puheenvuoron kolmannelle viittaavalle oppilaalleen.)
 Oppilas 3: No, tolla yhdellä on jotenki tosi surkee ilme.
 Hanna (nauraen): No niimpäs onki! Aika kurjaa. Mut hienosti oot kyllä tarkkaan kuvaa tutkinu!*

On the basis of the interpretations of the students, she gave positive feedback on how brightly they made different notions of the picture. Even though not all of the observations were actually related to the studied matter, she consciously strived for taking every student into account and supporting the self-concept of the students with the comment presented in the extract above. Her approach on noticing the ideas and thoughts given by students managed to motivate and activate children more eagerly (see e.g. Törmä 2011). Even though the moment was not long, one could sense how it metaphorically fed the enthusiasm of the students, as well as the positive atmosphere in the classroom.

It can be stated that even if the given feedback did not always concern the actual subject, it would be likely to have a positive effect on general the atmosphere in the classroom. The attitude towards the studied matter could also be seen to become better, since when one has the opportunity to be oneself and express his or her ideas fearlessly, the learning environment turns out to be more encouraging and pleasant. What is more, according to Reinke et al. (2011), due to a good mutual relationship between a teacher and students, students are likely to respect more the received feedback.

8.1.2 The role of teacher praise

When giving feedback is considered, the concept of teacher praise (see s. 2.2.1) is actively present during Hanna's English classes. In consequence, Hanna provides her students a great deal with positive, supportive feedback.

(2) Hanna: You figured that out very well! I wouldn't have been able to answer so well myself!

(2) Hanna: Tosi hienosti hoksattu! Enpä olis itekään noin hyvin osannut vastata!

(3) Hanna: Yep, just like that, great!

(3) *Hanna: Kyllä, just noin, hyvä!*

Indeed, Hanna was seeking to construct a very encouraging and open atmosphere (see e.g. Brophy 1981) where she clearly expects her students to try out and work with the given tasks without any prejudice. Consequently, teacher praise can be seen to link tightly with the aspect of *teacher's expectations* (see also s. 2.2.1) in Hanna's teaching.

The students seemed to be used to responding to the signalled expectations, as well as desiring to get positive, supportive feedback from their teacher. For example, when Hanna expressed not being totally satisfied with the outcome of a task, the students immediately reacted to the feedback and improved their effort. The following extract implies an example of that kind of a situation. Here, Hanna is asking her students to repeat specific words and in not completely satisfied with the participation and pronunciation of her students:

(4) *Hanna: Ok, a theatre. Repeat it, please. A theatre.*

Students (murmuring): A theatre.

Hanna: Hmm, let's give it another try. Now more clearly and loudly. A theatre.

Students (louder and clearer): A theatre!

Hanna: Much better, yes, very good!

(4) Hanna: Ok, a theatre. Repeat it, please. A theatre.

Oppilaat (mumisten): A theatre.

Hanna: Hmm, otetaas vielä kerran uusiks. Vähän selkeemmin ja kuuluvoammin. A theatre.

Oppilaat (kovempaa ja selkeämmin): A theatre!

Hanna: Much better, yes, very good.

On the basis of the findings, it can be stated that the way how a teacher perceives his or her students generally matters to the students. Gaining an approval and being able to answer to the expectations of a teacher seems to signify a great deal to children. Perhaps, it is due to the fact that, more often than not, children tend to imprint on their class teacher at some level, since they spend a lot of time with him or her, as well as build a rather close relationship with each other. In addition, if the relationship between a teacher and a student is close, warm and supportive, a teacher may even become an idol that the students look up to. A

teacher can, thus, be seen as one of the significant others, who supports the holistic growth of an individual (see e.g. Burns 1982).

8.1.3 The evaluation of a lesson

When the motivation of students is considered, it was really delighting to notice how Hanna was used to giving feedback to the whole class on the bygone lesson. The feedback was always encouraging and empowering, as it can, for example, be noticed in the following excerpts that illustrate the very last minutes of two different English lessons:

(5) Hanna: Very good, you were really hard-working today!

(5) Hanna: Tosi hyvää työtä tänään, ahkerasti jaksoitte!

(6) Hanna: You participated very well and actively despite the long day!

(6) Hanna: Hienosti ja aktiivisesti olitte mukana pitkän päivän päätteeksi!

It can be stated that one of the most important points in giving feedback is supporting the formation of one's self-confidence. In consequence, it is to be noted that the role of empowering feedback – particularly at the end of a lesson – may have a rather positive effect on what the very latest experience of a studied matter is for a student. As an example, even if a lesson had been challenging or otherwise unpleasant for an individual, the teacher's encouraging feedback may succeed to uplift the mood and atmosphere. What is more, it can be argued that the uplifting actions usually affect one's attitudes positively, too, if they manage to increase feelings of joy and satisfaction (see e.g. McMunn and Butler 2011; Bohner and Wänke 2002).

8.2 TUULA - THE CROWD HAS POWER

Tuula is a 5th grade class teacher and, as Hanna, similarly teaches English to her own class, too. The teaching of English is particularly significant for Tuula since she spent her childhood living in America and, consequently, she is determined to utilise her strong substance in English as much as possible. Her motivation and contributions to teach English can also be seen in the display of teaching

materials in the classroom: the majority of various mnemonics is in English. According to Tuula, the constant availability of English provides students with better possibilities for activating one's language skills and language acquisition.

8.2.1 The emphasis on reciprocity

From the very first moment, when stepping into Tuula's classroom, it could be noticed that the atmosphere in the classroom was really supportive and co-operative. Indeed, cooperation and the supporting of others were strongly present in the exercises provided by the teacher. For example, students were clearly used to work in pairs and small groups since they seemingly started working in an experienced way when a certain co-operative task was given to them.

As an example, the students had made posters according to their own interest in English and were prepared to present them orally in English, too. Before the presentations Tuula, however, asked her students to form groups and present the posters in smaller groups at first. She also asked everyone in a group to give constructive feedback each other in order to enhance one's individual presentations. While students gave feedback to each other, it was delighting to see Tuula circling among groups and she did not only make suggestions on how one could improve his or her performance, but she also gave feedback on how the students assessed each other. In other words, one of her aims during a lesson was to develop the students' skills in peer-feedback (see also Hall and Burke 2004). The following example demonstrates the notion:

(7) Tuula: That's the spirit, you support your friend very well! -- When you support your friend, it's the right thing to do.

(7) Tuula: Just noin, tosi hyvin tsempattu kaveria! -- Se on just oikein, että kannustetaan kaveria.

8.2.2 A gentle approach to corrective feedback

From the viewpoint of a teacher, it can be stated that sometimes it may be a little challenging to respond to incorrect answers provided by students. Nevertheless, the way how Tuula reacted, for example, to the wrong answers of her students was delighting. Indeed, Tuula cleverly managed to prompt her students to the right direction without really implying the answers to be incorrect:

(8) Tuula: If we think about walking to school at the moment, right now; how would you say that in English?

(Tuula gives a turn to her student.)

Student: Eerm, I am walk a school.

Tuula: Hmm, yep, good, now you're on the right track. But what do you need to remember? Not walk but... Right here, at the moment. (The teacher demonstrates the act of walking mimetically.)

Student: I am walking a school!

Tuula: Jees, that's right! Great. By the way, remember that we tend to say walk to school in English. For example, I'm walking to school right now.

(8) Tuula: Jos aatellaan, että kävelet just nyt parhaillaan kouluun, niin mites se sanottais enkuks?

(Tuula antaa vastausvuoron oppilaalle.)

Oppilas: Öö, I am walk a school.

Tuula: Hmm, hyvä, joo, nyt oot oikeilla jäljillä. Mut mitäs sun nyt pitikään muistaa? Ei walk vaan... Just nyt parhaillaan. (Opettaja demonstroi kävelyä miimisesti.)

Oppilas: I am walking a school!

Tuula: Jees, juurikin näin! Hienoo. Ja muista muuten, että kun kävellään kouluun, niin sehän ois to. Esimerkiks I'm walking to school right now.

Indeed, it can be stated that Tuula had contrived to benefit rather successfully the prompts and elicitations, which can be considered to be a remarkable part of *corrective feedback* (see s. 2.2.1). What is more, the roles of solidarity and cooperation were emphasised in relation to the corrective feedback, as well. As an example, when one had difficulties with thinking of the right answer, Tuula suggested the others to help finding the right solution:

(9) Tuula: For example, how did it go; how do you ask if someone likes ice-cream?

Student 1: A man or a woman?

Tuula: It doesn't matter, you may choose.

Student 2: Do he like ice-cream?

Tuula: Yes, you're on the right track, but how did it go; he and she will get angry, if... (The teacher refers to a learning rhyme.) What is missing? Can somebody help?

A student shouts: (The letter) S is missing!

(The teacher calls another student by their name as a sign of a floor.)

Student 3: Do he likes ice-cream?

Tuula: Yep, now it's getting warmer. But be careful now, where does the letter s need to be now in the questions? It's not the word do, but...

(The teacher nods to another student.)

Oppilas 2: Does he like ice-cream!

Tuula: Very good! Hey, you helped your friend very well.

(9) Tuula: Miten esimerkiksi kysyitkään, pitääkö hän jäätelöstä?

Oppilas 1: Ai mies vai nainen?

Tuula: Ei oo väliä kumpi, saat ite päättää.

Oppilas 2: Do he like ice-cream?

Tuula: Joo, oot ihan oikeilla jäljillä, mut mites se menikään; he ja she suuttuu, jos...

(Opettaja viittaa erääseen muistiloruun.) Mikä puuttuu? Osaako joku auttaa?

Yksi oppilas huudahtaa: S (-kirjain) puuttuu!

(Opettaja kutsuu erästä oppilasta nimeltä vastaamaan.)

Oppilas 3: Do he likes ice-cream?

Tuula: Joo, nyt polttaa jo. Mut nyt tarkkana, missäs sen ässän pitää nyt olla kysymyksessä? Ei oo do, vaan...

(Opettaja nyökkää oppilaalle vastausvuoron.)

Oppilas 2: Does he like ice-cream!

Tuula: Very good! Hei, tosi hyvin autettu kaveria.

Consequently, it can be stated that instead of acting as a teacher who dictates everything literally, she had chosen a more student-centred approach, encouraging her students for more independent thinking. She clearly leans on *facilitative* feedback (see e.g. Black and Wiliam 1998). In other words, she does not give direct feedback continuously, but makes subtle suggestions, and rather gives a nudge into the right direction than pointing out the right answer immediately (see e.g. Ammar and Spada 2006; Panova and Lyster 2002; Lyster and Ranta 1997).

On a more general level, it can be argued that these days the role of a teacher is in a constant change, and at the moment the teacher can perhaps be described as a guide to the sources of information than a pourer of knowledge. Indeed, the information is increasingly available for everyone today, meaning the teachers have to be alerted concerning the issue, as well as guide the learners towards individual, critical thinking (POPS: 14).

8.3 PIRKKO - THE ENCOUNTERING OF STUDENTS

Pirkko is an experienced English teacher and has taught primary school students for several years. The Pirkko's English class, which was observed for the present study, was a class of 5th graders, and she had been teaching them since their 3rd grade. On the basis of the impression achieved via observation, Pirkko could be considered to be an innovative and proficient English teacher who consciously concentrates on taking every pupil into account as an individual.

8.3.1 The importance of an individual

As the narrative title above implies, one important pedagogical cornerstone in Pirkko's teaching is taking every pupil in a classroom into account uniquely. Indeed, during the three-hour observation, Pirkko took proficiently and equally every student into consideration. For instance, two out of three observed lessons began with the teacher asking every student a question, which not only activated the English skills of students, but also enabled the teacher to communicate with each child personally, and at the same time indicate everyone the English lesson to have started.

As it was aforementioned, Pirkko strived for encountering every student personally but she did not implement it similarly every time. One time she did ask everyone direct questions, but at the beginning of other lesson she clearly wanted her students to be more independent when class activity is considered. She started by asking what kind of a picture or figure everyone got from their advent calendars. The teacher continued asking questions as long as everyone had raised their hands and answered. However, one pupil was unwilling to say anything in front of the whole classroom and, here, Pirkko offered the pupil with the opportunity to tell about the experience afterwards. It is to be noted that although the ultimate goal of the activity - where everyone had participated equally - was not achieved, the teacher expressed being interested in hearing everyone's experiences

Evidently, one of Pirkko's pedagogical cornerstones consisted of giving a great deal of personified feedback to every student. The personification usually became concrete by calling the students by their names. However, the tone of the voice, as well as an approving eye-contact were strong implications for personal feedback, too.

It could be noted that the students were used to being acknowledged equally by their teacher. Consequently, they were, for example, really eager to raise their hands when asking a question or become activated when a certain task was given to them. It can perhaps be stated that since the students have regularly been taken into account by their teacher, they also have begun to thirst for the attention. In consequence, the vortex of the aforementioned phenomena can be seen to feed itself – and perhaps it manages to activate and motivate students even more?

8.3.2 The usage of teacher's expectations for effect

What is more, alongside taking every student into consideration as an individual, Pirkko was able to utilise proficiently the concept of teacher's expectations (see s. 2.2.1) in relation to the whole class – rather similarly as Hanna appealed to her students (see s. 8.1). For example, by giving the impression that the students are collectively responsible for remembering something, Pirkko managed to motivate and, in consequence, activate the students during a class.

(10) Pirkko: What other kinds of adverbs are there? Who can remember?

(Only a few students raised their hands at this point.)

Pirkko: Hey come on, this was your homework! I know you can do this, don't be shy!

(Ever more several students raise their hand in order to signify classroom activity.)

(10) Pirkko: Mitä muita liikkuvia määreitä oli? Kuka muistaa?

(Oppilaista muutama viittaa tässä vaiheessa.)

Pirkko: Hei kamoon, nää oli läksynä! Mä tiedän, että te osaatte. Reippaasti vaan!

(Huomattavasti useampi oppilas nostaa kätensä viittauksen merkiksi.)

Indeed, it seems that when the teacher referred to the whole class as one, it evoked solidarity in students. As for the solidarity, the students became

motivated and participated in the progression of a lesson more actively. In consequence, the students were eager to correspond to the expectations of their teacher. As Törmä (2011: 180) points out, teachers should make students an active part in feedback-giving in order to, for example, support their holistic growth.

Nevertheless, the motivation and solidarity among students may solely have stemmed from the fact that the students have a positive class spirit, too. Granted, not all students imprint on their teacher and meet the demanded needs (see s. 8.1). Perhaps the phenomenon and at the same time the two aforementioned extremes could, however, be worth exploring more in the future.

8.3.3 The alternative choices for the conventional praise

According to Wong and Waring (2009), when indicating a success in a learning environment, the excess usage of the phrase *very good*, may wear out and become rather tedious at some point. Indeed, they suggest that when encouraging and giving positive feedback to an individual, the phrases and words ought to be more personified and varying in order to make the situation more significant.

When Pirkko's English classes are considered, she fluently and proficiently utilised a wide, varying range of words and phrases in order to express a success of an individual or a general satisfaction with the situation. As an example, Pirkko used actively words, such as *excellent*, *marvellous*, *perfect* and *well done*. What is more, instead of randomly choosing varying words, she obviously saved and used words, such as *marvellous* and *perfect* in situations where a student had succeeded particularly well (see also Brophy 1981). The distinction could be recognized by the gestures and signals Pirkko gave to her students. It was also possible to notice how the students also paid attention to the changes in nuances provided by their teacher. Even though the present study does not concentrate on non-verbal language and the tone of voice, the two aforementioned factors could also be interesting topics for further studies.

In addition to the fact that she used rich language for making the provided feedback more versatile, it can be considered that from a pedagogical viewpoint the usage of diverse words is valuable. That is, the students are provided with more diverse vocabulary, which may have a positive impact on the expansion of one's active vocabulary.

8.4 SUMMARY

Being a teacher is a profession where one inevitably works with his or her personality. In consequence, it is perhaps impossible to arrange in a sequence what kinds of a qualities are the most ultimate features for being capable of providing one's students with as skilled feedback as possible. Nevertheless, a framework of a sort can be constructed when considering the matter.

It seems apparent that a good, supportive atmosphere for learning has a notable effect on how students become activated and motivated towards the studied matter (see e.g. McMunn and Butler 2011). When a teacher is able to construct a significant and safe relationship with his or her students, the students seem to be more open-minded sharing their thoughts and ideas, which is highly likely to positively affect the overall mood, as well as the attitudes of an individual (see e.g. Törmä 2011; Hall and Burke 2004).

Moreover, it seems evident on the basis of the findings that, when motivating students is considered, elicitations, prompts and expectations of a teacher also have an effect on how actively and eagerly students participate during a class (see also e.g. Fisher 2011; Hall and Burke 2004). It is to be noted that the given feedback does not always have to be direct and obvious, since methods for giving feedback, which give students more responsibility and guide for independent thinking, seem to be rather effective, too.

9 CHILDREN'S ATTITUDES AND ENGLISH

The second part of the analysis of the present study is concentrated on children's notions and attitudes towards English as a language, as well as studying it at school. Indeed, the two aforementioned phenomena are explored in relation to the effect of interactional feedback on the studied matter. As in the earlier section, the summary is finally constructed on the basis of the findings.

9.1 THE GENERAL ATTITUDES TO ENGLISH AND STUDYING IT

The following subsection concentrates on analysing the data gathered via questionnaires with open-ended questions. In total, 56 participants answered the questionnaire, which all in all consisted of four different questions⁵:

- 1) What is your opinion of the English lessons at school?
- 2) What do you think, what kind of a language is English?
- 3) How do you feel about studying English?
- 4) What kind of a teacher is your own English teacher?

Here, every question can be considered to represent and form a separate theme giving frames for the viewpoint and analysis of children's general attitudes towards school-English and English as a language in general. In consequence, every question, as well as their related answers are analysed as their own entities.

9.1.1 Overall opinions of English taught at school

The purpose of the first open-ended question was to map and explore children's overall opinions towards English taught at school. A general outline seems to be that children have rather positive experiences and opinions of school-English. According to the answers, the factor, affecting the positive outcome of the findings, is highly likely to be the fact that several participants appeared to experience school-English as a rather easy subject:

⁵ The actual format of the questionnaire can be found in the appendix.

(11) "Really NICEE!!! because English is such an easy language when people hear it in many places!"

(11) "Tosi KIVAAAA!!! koska englanti on niin helppo kieli, kun sitä kuulee monessa paikassa!"

(12) "-- nice because there are many easy things there"

(12) "-- kivoja koska siellä on paljon helppoja juttuja"

(13) "The English classes at school are easy, and we learn new things."

(13) "Koulun Englannin tunnit ovat helppoja. ja niillä oppii uusia asioita."

It can be argued that the general level of acquisition of English has increased during the past few decades (see. e.g. Leppänen et al. 2008). Indeed, children are these days engaged in using and encountering English more and more, for example, during their leisure-time. Thus, the phenomenon very likely has an effect on the fact that the level of language proficiency has become notably higher already among children.

However, at the same time, it is worth emphasising that not all of the answers were overtly positive. There were answers, according to which, English taught at school is sometimes even a little boring:

(14) "-- at times it's boring and sometimes we have dull exercises."

(14) "-- välillä on tylsää koska joskus on tylsiä tehtäviä."

(15) "-- it's boring when we do exercises in our workbooks"

(15) "-- silloin tylsiä kun tehdään kirjaan tehtäviä"

The fact that school-English was regarded as boring was highly related to exercises task done at school. One reason for the notion seemed to be that the tasks given were too easy and not challenging enough:

(16) "They (English lessons) are boring because the exercises are too easy."

(16) "Ne (englannin tunnit) ovat tylsiä, koska tehtävät ovat liian helppoja."

Consequently, on the basis of the findings, it can be questioned, whether school-English in general, as well as national curriculum truly meet the needs of developing the language skills of an individual. In other words, if the level of language acquisition in informal learning contexts these days enables the fast and

fluent development of one's language proficiency, and the school system and the quality of teaching English, in particular, do not relatively correspond to the situation, learning of English may become tedious and not motivating enough.

What is more, according to the answers, a teacher seemed to have a positive effect on how school-English is perceived. Particularly, the professionalism of a teacher and, consequently, the quality of teaching seemed to have a positive impact on how the English lessons are considered (see also McMunn and Butler 2011):

(17) "teachers teach so well that it's nice to learn English."

(17) "opettajat opettaa hyvin niin on kiva opetella englantia."

(18) "quite nice because the teacher teaches well and the exercises are nice."

(18) "aika kivoja, koska opettaja opettaa hyvin ja tehtävät ovat kivoja."

(19) "English lessons are nice because -- the teacher can really teach --"

(19) "enkun tunnit ovat kivoja koska -- ope osaa opettaa --"

(20) "A good teacher"

(20) "Hyvä opettaja"

The aforementioned findings support the notion that the teacher influences on how his or her students perceive the taught subject, as well as form their personal attitudes towards it. It was, however, rather surprising how the majority of the teacher-related answers considering the positive opinions of English consisted of the expertise of a teacher. For example, no references to the character traits of a teacher were made here, and one could think that the personality of a teacher is a remarkable factor whether the learning process is considered pleasant.

Alongside the impact of a teacher, the various and diverse teaching methods seemed to be one of the decisive factors influencing the positive opinions of English among children. In other words, when the exercises provided by the activity books were regarded as dull by some of the participants, the actual teaching methods of the teacher were considered to be interesting and varying:

(21) "English lessons are really nice and different. For example, during a class we sing, write and speak both English and Finnish."

(21) *"Englannin tunnrit ovat tosi kivoja ja monipuolisia. Tunnilla esim. lauletaan, kirjoitetaan ja puhutaan sekä englantia että suomea."*

(22) *"It's fun because there are so unusual things."*

(22) *"Hauskoja koska on niin erikoisia juttuja."*

(23) *"English lessons are nice because we study words with nice things, such as with songs and games. Doing homework is also sometimes really fun."*

(23) *"Englannin tunnrit on kivoja, koska sanoja opetetaan kivoilla jutuilla esim. lauluilla ja leikeillä. Välillä läksyt on tosi hauskoja tehtäviä."*

Indeed, it seems that exercises and tasks, differing from the very usual model and conventions of teaching English, are likely to be regarded as the most motivating and inspiring teaching methods according to the participants of the present study (see also Widdowson 2002). Thus, it can perhaps be concluded that as the informal learning environments constantly become more diverse these days, the teaching of English at schools should also support the fact by providing students with various, multi-dimensional teaching methods simultaneously.

9.1.2 Descriptions of English as a language

In this subsection the fact how children, in general, perceive English as a language is analysed. In the light of the present study, it can be considered rather interesting how straightforward, as well as brief the answers of the participants of the study were here. Granted, a critical outlook on the analysis of the findings has to be taken into account in view of this. When the age of the participants is considered, it may perhaps be that the phrasing of a question was not clarifying enough. Whatever the truth, the most notable finding was that the majority of the participants stated the language to be either easy or difficult:

(24) *"English is fun and rather easy --"*

(24) *"Englannin kieli on hauskaa ja melko helppoa --"*

(25) *"It's (English) quite nice because it's not that difficult."*

(25) *"Se (englannin kieli) on ihan mukavaa, koska se ei ole kovin vaikeaa."*

(26) *"In my opinion, English is a little difficult."*

(26) *"Minun mielestä englannin kieli on vähän hankalaa."*

(27) *"It's difficult because there are difficult words in English"*

(27) *"Vaikeaa koska on vaikeita sanoja"*

Admittedly, such polarised views may, as it was aforementioned, depend on the age of the participants. In other words, it may be easier for young children to choose either of the extremes than a more neutral viewpoint, which would perhaps need a more in-depth analysis – which might be quite challenging. Nevertheless, as it can be noticed, the overall justifications of one's opinions are rather scarce, too. It may be due to the fact that although the participants were reminded to give reasons for their answers, the questions were vague and could have needed more clarifying questions. However, the questions could unconsciously have guided the answerer and, then, the answers might be regarded as biased and not valid for the present study.

Nevertheless, one was also able to find more thorough explaining factors for the aforementioned polarised views via some answers. One reason for finding English pleasant was that the value and various purposes of English as a language is understood:

(28) "In my opinion, English is interesting because English is spoken in many countries and you can come along with it in many holiday resorts."

(28) "Englannin kieli on minusta mielenkiintoista, koska Englantia puhutaan tosi monessa maassa ja sillä pärjää yleisissä loma kohteissa hyvin."

(29) "English is fun because I'm going to need it in my life"

(29) "Englannin kieli on kivaa, koska sitä tulee tarvitsemaan elämässä"

(30) "(English is) Easy and fun. It's an advantage when studying German and travelling."

(30) "(englannin kieli on) Helppoa ja hauskaa. Siitä on hyötyä saksan opiskelussa ja matkustelussa."

Rather similarly, as Aro (2009) explored on the basis of her study, children do seem to understand and name contexts where English can be utilised. However, the named contexts can be seen as rather traditional – somewhat old-fashioned even? In other words, the aforementioned contexts have been emphasized for decades, but in order to make language learning more motivating, as well as more modern at the same time, the various informal learning environments concerning the lives of children and youngsters ought to be taken into account more actively.

As it was aforesaid, alongside the fact that English was considered easy, the other side of the coin was also found in the answers. The following arguments were, for example, used when describing the reasons for English being difficult:

(31) "(English is) Difficult but nice because the way how the words are written is different from their pronunciation."

(31) "(englannin kieli on) Vaikeaa mutta mukavaa, koska sanat pitää kirjoittaa eri tavalla kuin ne lausutaan."

(32) "Difficult because there is so much to remember"

(32) "Vaikeaa koska niin paljon muistettavaa"

Indeed, it is to be taken into account that although there are various informal learning contexts for English these days and the level of English proficiency among children and youngsters has increased during the past few decades, the learning of English provides some students with challenges. In consequence, the availability and acquisition of English should not be taken for granted. For example, in order to make the learning process as motivating and fruitful as possible, every individual – and their level of English – ought to be noticed.

9.1.3 Feelings about studying English

When the actual studying English is considered, the participants had written down rather similar answers compared to their general opinions of English as a language. Indeed, once again pupils provided rather polarised answers by dividing the studying of English to be either pleasant or boring:

(33) "(English feels) Nice and easy"

(33) "(englanti tuntuu) Kivalta ja helpolta"

(34) "fun and useful"

(34) "hauskalta ja hyödylliseltä"

(35) "dull because there are so difficult things"

(35) "mälsältä on niin vaikeita juttuja"

(36) "Sometimes easy and sometimes difficult"

(36) "Joskus helpolta ja joskus vaikealta."

Consequently, it can be considered that children do mainly seem to have a rather consistent opinion of English. In other words, whether the focus is on English as a language or English as a school subject, the general opinion seems to be the same. It may, therefore, be challenging to explore if one's personal opinion of English primarily consists of school-English or English used his or her leisure-time. Evidently, there is also the possibility that both scenarios have an equal effect on how English as a language is perceived.

Whatever the truth, it is rather obvious that English as a language has a significant position in the lives of children and youngsters these days. Certainly, it can perhaps be stated that if a person encounters and uses English on one's own initiative during free-time, the proficiency of English is more likely to enhance – or at least support the language learning at school. It can also be argued that the positive attitudes, and particularly the fondness of the language, are highly likely to increase if one actively uses English when carrying out a pleasant leisure-time activity.

9.1.4 Notions of one's own English teachers

The final subsection of the analysis of the questionnaires concentrates on mapping students' personal notions of their own English teachers. The starting point here is – as it had been aforementioned in the eighth chapter – that two of the teachers are their students' class teachers teaching also English, and one of the teachers is a subject teacher – teaching only English.

When exploring children's opinions of their English teachers, the general viewpoint proved to be highly positive. The majority of the students experienced their English teachers to be warm, inspiring and skilful.

(37) *"My English teacher is nice, happy and fair."*

(37) *"Englannin opettajani on mukava, iloinen ja oikeuden mukainen."*

(38) *"Our teacher is nice because when I ask something, she can explain how the exercise is done"*

(38) *"Ope on kiva, koska jos kysyn jotain niin hän osaa selittää tehtävän"*

(39) "Fun fair and even-handedly gives turn for everybody, even if you didn't know the answer"

(39) "Hauska reilu antaa tasa-puolisesti vuoroja vaikka ei tietäisi vastausta"

(40) "Our teacher is really clear so she really can, for example, explain what each word means. She is also nice and friendly --"

(40) "Ope on tosi selvä sanainen eli osaa oikeasti selittää esim. mitä mikäkin sana tarkoittaa. Myös mukava ja ystävällinen --"

It is to be noted, that alongside the appreciation of the expertise, the personality of a teacher also seems to have an impact on what kinds of features make the teacher pleasant. Moreover, there were also answers in the questionnaires, according to which, the fact that one's own class teacher works as an English teacher is pleasant. In other words, students seem to experience it positive if the person teaching English is their very own class teacher:

(41) "Our English teacher is nice because she's our class teacher."

(41) "Englannin opettaja on mukava, koska hän on meidän luokan opettaja."

(42) "-- It's nice to have our own class teacher (to teach us English) --"

(42) "-- Se on kivaa, kun on oma ope (joka opettaa englantia). --"

The aforementioned viewpoint may be due to the fact that the class teacher primarily spends a great deal of time with his or her students. S/he is, thus, able to construct a solid trust and a good relationship with them, when there is perhaps a higher possibility to become better acquainted with the students. That is to say, it can be considered that the starting point with teaching is somewhat different when a class teacher and a subject teacher are compared to each other.

What is more, it can be noted that the encouraging support provided by the teacher, as well as the mutual, warm relationship have an effect on the development of one's self-concept. In other words, if the teacher aims at supporting the learning processes – and the personal growth – of a student, the self-esteem and self-confidence of a student are highly likely to enhance and evolve.

9.2 MORE THOROUGH INSIGHTS VIA INTERVIEWS

On the basis the answers given in the questionnaire, two pupils from the English class of each teacher were chosen for an interview. The purpose of the interview was to improve and deepen the understanding of the studied phenomenon. In particular, the purpose of the interviews was to map and explore the possible relationship between the interactive feedback given by the teacher and pupils' attitudes towards English. As in the earlier chapter when analysing the videotaped English lessons, pseudonyms are used in order to follow and honour the ethical aspects in the present study (see s. 7.3).

The analysis of the interviews is constructed by discussing the most notable themes arisen on the basis of the answers. All in all, the interview consisted of five different questions. During the interviews, more clarifying questions are, however, presented, if necessary. The core questions were the following:

- 3) What is your general opinion of English as a school-subject?
- 4) What are the pros and cons during English lessons?
- 8) What kind of an atmosphere is there during your English class?
- 9) What is you English teacher like?
- 10) If you think about English as a school-subject and yourself, what kinds of thoughts come into your mind?

The answers provided by the six participants of the interview are presented by dividing the discussions into three subsections. Each section consists of students of the same teacher, and in order to make the analysis as clarifying as possible, the students are introduced in the same order as the teachers in the previous chapter 8.

9.2.1 Ville and Krista

Ville and Krista are Hanna's students and, consequently, 4th graders. Both Ville and Krista seem to have rather positive attitudes towards English, in general Both Ville and Krista also described the atmosphere during English lessons as pleasant

and nice. That is to say, they both said to feel themselves secured and encouraged on English lessons:

(43) Ville: English is quite nice and useful. -- The atmosphere is quite nice, too, because we can talk normally. -- Our teacher is funny.

(43) Ville: Enkku on ihan kivaa ja hyödyllistä. -- Sit tunnelma on ihan hyvää, ku saa puhua normaalisti. -- Ope on hauska.

(44) Krista: (English is) Quite pleasant. Our classes are always a lot of fun because our teacher tells a lot of jokes. -- What is more, I don't have to be afraid if I answer something wrong.

(44) Krista: (Englanti on) Ihan mukavaa. Meidän tunnit on aina hauskoja, ku ope vitsailee paljon. -- Sit ei tartte jännittää, jos vaikka vastaiski jotain väärin.

When the aforementioned extracts are considered, it is to be noted that the role of the teacher is highly emphasised. In consequence, it can be concluded on the basis of the answers that their teacher Hanna has managed to create a supportive learning environment, where the students have the courage to make errors and feel relaxed. For example, according to Ville, the fact that there is a chance for talking *normally* with one's classmates implies that the student feels his- or herself uninhibited and feel that s/he has the opportunity to attend a class without tensions.

What is more, the significance of the teacher is also emphasised in the comments of Ville and Krista more thoroughly. In other words, by listing certain qualities they indicate that the warmth and sincerity of their teacher also has an effect on how the English classes are perceived in general. It is to be noted that the listed qualities are rather similar to the observations made in the chapter 8. For instance, laughter and general good mood was mentioned twice in Ville's answers:

(45) Ville: Well, it's nice because our teacher tells funny stories. -- We laugh a lot here at school.

(45) Ville: No, on kivaa, ku opella on hassuja juttuja. -- Paljo me kyllä nauretaan täällä koulus.

(46) Krista: Our teacher is really nice.

(46) Krista: Meidän ope on kyllä tosi mukava.

9.2.2 Sanna and Aaro

Sanna and Aaro are students on Tuula's class. Both students seemed to be aware of the purposes of use, as well as the usefulness on English. It may perhaps be due to the fact – as it was aforementioned – that Tuula had spent her childhood in America and, consequently, the role of English is powerfully seen in the classroom every day. What is more, it can be concluded that Tuula has put time and effort on giving reasons for studying English, and its relevance as a language:

(47) Sanna: Well, people need it (English) if they go abroad. And when I'm a grown-up I may have a job where it's useful to know English.

(47) Sanna: No, sitä (englantia) tarttee ainaki jos lähtee ulkomaille. Ja sit voi olla aikuisena joku työ, missä se on hyödyllistä.

(48) Aaro: It's good to know English if you, for example, go travelling. -- And it's also easier to understand different things on the web.

(48) Aaro: Enkkuu on hyvä osata, jos vaikka matkustelee. -- Sit niinku netissä voi esimerkiks ymmärtää enemmän asioita.

When the pros and cons during English lessons are considered, both mention that the possibility for learning new things feels pleasant. Here, it can be stated that the arguments indicate students having positive attitudes to English in general. Thus, it can be concluded that since the students understand the instrumental value of English, they are able to rejoice the chances for learning the language.

It is to be noted that teacher giving reasons for studying a specific subject can be seen as a part of teacher's expectations. That is to say, the fact how the teacher, for example, justifies the importance of learning English, and emphasises its usefulness, can perhaps be interpreted as a form of feedback. In other words, the teacher indicates to his or her students why learning and the usage of English is significant, and the arguments signifies what kinds of actions the teacher expects from his or her students in order to achieve the certain goals for learning.

9.2.3 Linnea and Heidi

Linnea and Heidi have Pirkko as their English teacher, meaning they have Pirkko's English lesson two times a week. Although Pirkko teaches them only twice each week, she has been their English teacher since the 3rd grade. In consequence, it can be stated that the students are, for all that, accustomed to Pirkko as their teacher.

When their opinions of English as a school-subject are considered, both have a positive attitude towards English. Furthermore, instead of solely considering English as fun, they seem to understand the instrumental value of it. Rather similarly, as Hanna's students Sanna and Aaro pointed out, Linnea and Heidi lean on arguments that are very much alike. In consequence, it can perhaps be concluded that since Pirkko is a subject teacher of English, and Tuula has lived her childhood in America, they both can be seen to have exceptional personal experiences of the usage English – making the teaching of English their specialty. Then, it seems rather apparent how the justifications for using English is simultaneously natural:

(49) Linnea: Erm, English can, at least, be useful if you go on holiday somewhere. What is more, you can, for example, understand more, erm, foreign songs and movies. -- And someone can, erm, ask you something in English on the street.

(49) Linnea: Öö, enkku voi olla hyödyllistä ainaki, jos lähtee niinku lomalle jonneki. Sit sen avulla voi ymmärtää paremmin esimerkiks vaikka niinku, öö, ulkomaalaisia kappaleita ja leffoja. -- Sit joku voi, öö, kadullaki tulla niinku kysymään jotain sulta enkuks.

(50) Heidi: It's good to know English because you need it everywhere.

(50) Heidi: Enkkua on siks hyvä osata, ku sitä tarttee kaikkialla.

At the same time, both, however, seemed to have a rather negative attitudes towards English tests. For example, Linnea stated the test to be boring, whereas Heidi regarded them as unpleasantly surprising and challenging:

(51) Linnea: Well, they (English test) are so easy, and it's a little boring.

(51) Linnea: No, ne (englannin kokeet) on niin helppoja, et se on vähän tylsää.

(52) Heidi: *Well, English tests sometimes feel, erm, rather difficult. And there can also be something surprising in the test. -- The tests make me sometimes a little nervous.*

(52) Heidi: *No enkun kokeet tuntuu välillä, öö, aika vaikeilta. Ja sit voi tulla jotain yllättävää siinä. -- Mua saattaa ne kokeet välillä vähän jännittää.*

Indeed, as it was aforementioned (see. s. 9.1.2), it is worth examining critically, whether the school-English truly corresponds the requirements of real-life, as well as the actual purposes of use of English or not. What is more, when the learning is seen as a continuous process, it is important to take into account that all testing correlates to what actually has been studied and emphasised. It can be argued that the right kind of a consistency establishes safety and a better starting point for sincere relationship between the teacher and the student. Furthermore, when the viewpoint of the development of one's self-esteem is considered, it is important that learning environment would be as warm and comforting as possible, in order to enable the possibility to relax and make errors without the feeling of being judged. Indeed, some children may feel anxious about testing situations and the potential knowledge may then be buried under the distress. Both students, however, regarded the atmosphere during English lessons positive. Furthermore, the role of the teacher emerged here:

(53) Linnea: *They (English lessons) are always so much fun. -- That's because our teacher comes up with nice excercises.*

(53) Linnea: *Ne (englannin tunnrit) on aina tosi kivoja. -- Noku ope keksii aina niinku kaikkia kivoja tehtäviä.*

(54) Heidi: *Well, English lessons have their own feel. -- It's somehow really exciting and different. -- Well, we do all kinds of different things there.*

(54) Heidi: *No enkun tunneilla on sellanen oma tunnelmasa. -- Se on sellanen jotenki tosi jännä ja erilainen. -- Ku me tehään paljon erilaisia juttuja.*

Indeed, as it can be stated on the basis of Heidi's argument, she finds English lessons different compared to other classes. The argument implies that she considers English lessons refreshing and inspiring due to the personal teaching methods provided by the teacher. In consequence, when the students were asked to describe their English teacher in more detail, the answers were positive:

(55) Linnea: *Well, she's really nice and funny, too.*

(55) Linnea: *No on se tosi mukava ja hassuki.*

(56) Heidi: Our teacher is really good. -- Because she can teach really well. She also comes up with really good and different mnemonics, as well as everything else.

(56) Heidi: Ope on tosi hyvä. -- Koska se osaa opettaa tosi hyvin. Sit se myös keksii, öö, sellasia tosi hyviä ja erilaisia muistisääntöjä ja kaikkee.

Once again, Heidi's argument indicates that she holds her English teacher in high regard. The justifications are based on the proficiency and pedagogical skilfulness of the teacher, which seem to be significant for Heidi.

9.3 SUMMARY

Indeed, on the basis of the findings of the present study, it seems that children generally seem to perceive English as a pleasant language. The attitudes towards English as a school-subject also appears to be positive all in all. Despite the fact that children had rather polarised views on English – due to the fact the language was more often than not regarded as easy or difficult –, the general opinions of English, however, had a positive tone. That is, although English was described to be a difficult language by some participants of the present study, it did not necessarily and immediately mean that the attitudes would have been negative as a result of the challenges of learning English.

An impression is given by the participants of the study that the role of a teacher has an obvious impact on how the school-English is appreciated. In other words, if the presence of the teacher was considered to be pleasant, the significance of it was also mentioned when the students were asked whether they perceived English as an engaging language or not.

In addition, the skilfulness of a teacher was clearly appreciated by students. To some extent, the role of proficiency was perhaps emphasised due to the fact that some children considered English to be challenging and, in consequence, the idea of a qualified teacher may calm a student having difficulties with learning English.

10 DISCUSSION

Although in the previous section the data was analysed and discussed to some extent, the following section yet concentrates on providing one with a discussion on a more general level. The section is constructed by dividing the discussion under certain themes, which can be considered to be the most significant findings or insights in the light of the present study.

Indeed, it seems obvious that children find the positive, empowering feedback as a factor having a positive effect on their attitudes towards English as a language. It is to be noted that in order to evaluate the impact of feedback, one has to be aware of the set goals for the process of giving feedback (Price et al. 2010). Furthermore, according to Price et al. (2010: 278) the person assessing the outcome of the provision of feedback also has an effect on how the findings are interpreted. In consequence, it has to be taken into account that the following discussion is constructed on the basis of the interests of the present study.

Admittedly, the active usage of English during one's leisure-time can also have a notable impact on the positive attitudes. For example, when utilising the language in a recreational environment, the associations for the target language may develop affirmative. However, English has also established its position as a school-subject in Finnish schools and, consequently, the learning of English can also be regarded as a significant matter. The universal, dominant role of English, as well as the rapid increase in the usage of English in youth cultures can particularly be seen as supporting factors for the aforementioned statement (e.g. Leppänen et al. 2008). It would, thus, seem that Finnish children's attitudes towards English as a language are explored rather unilaterally if the influence of English taught at school is not taken into consideration, too.

10.1 RAPPORT IN A CLASSROOM

The general relationship between the teacher and the students, as well as simultaneously the personality of the teacher have a rather apparent influence on how children perceive the studying of English. For example, according to Reinke et al. (2011: 12), the students are more likely to engage in learning situations, if the mutual teacher-student relationship is sincere. In other words, children seem to be more activated and motivated during a lesson if the teacher proves to be inspiring and encouraging. That is to say, the two aforementioned factors manage to construct a supporting and safe learning environment, which is highly likely to affect positively on children's general outlook on English as a language, too. What is more, according to Törmä (2011), the rapport in a classroom is highly likely to promote the personal, holistic growth a student.

It can perhaps be generalised that the inner solution for the feel-good classroom, as well as the affirmative attitudes of an individual are evolved around the warmth of the teacher. In other words, if a reliable and compassionate learning environment is created, the pupils are apt to engaging themselves in the prevailing learning situation. What is more, it can perhaps be stated that if a teacher has a good relationship with his or her students, the students are more likely to become imprinted on their teacher and, consequently, the teacher strengthens his or her as a significant other in the life of a student, too (see. e.g. Burns 1982).

It is to be noted that the warm and trustworthy relationship, more often than not, affects positively the construction of one's self-concept. It is, however, worth critical exploring, whether students idolising their teacher is utterly a beneficial and righteous starting point in teaching or not. That is, if students feel imprinted on their teacher, the classroom management, as well as the motivating of students may basically be easier for the teacher. It ought to be taken into account that, at the same time, from the viewpoint of the individualistic confrontation of a student, the student's possibilities for individual thinking may decrease if the learning environment scarcely encourages to criticise and problem-solving.

10.2 CHILDREN'S POLARISED PERCEPTIONS OF ENGLISH

More often than not, children tend to describe English either easy or difficult. In the light of the statement, the participants of the present study also presented the polarised views. As it was aforementioned (see s. 9.1), the young age of children can perhaps be a factor affecting the plain, contradictory statements provided by the participants. At the same time, it ought to be taken into account that although the increase of the everyday usage of English among children and youngsters is highly likely to have a positive impact on the level of their English proficiency, it is important to take into consideration children who have difficulties and challenges with the learning English.

Indeed, despite the remarkable availability of informal learning environments for English today (see e.g. Leppänen et al. 2008), there are simultaneously children who find studying languages demanding and difficult. Furthermore, certain learning disabilities may have a notorious impact on the learning results. It seems rather self-evident that if one has major challenges with studying, the motivation and the attitudes towards the studied matter may be quite scarce. As it was aforementioned, the role of a supportive and safe learning environment gets highlighted here, because even if the learning proves to be challenging, the attitudes towards learning may be more positive if an individual is encouraged and taken into account enough.

10.3 THE SIGNIFICANCE OF AN INDIVIDUAL

As mentioned above, it can be stated that taking students into consideration at an individual level may have an increase in the learning motivation and how s/he perceives the studied subject, in general (see also McMunn and Butler 2011: 159). The individualistic approach in teaching can, for example, consist of specified, differentiated tasks for students with dissimilar proficiency level in English.

However, at the same time, it is to be noted that the sincere encountering of an individual by the teacher also has an effect on how a pupil finds the learning situation. By the means of strengthening and supporting the self-esteem and self-confidence of an individual, the learner may feel the learning situation more empowering, as well as motivating.

When the constructing of one's self-concept is considered, the teacher has a major role in supporting and affecting the process. Simultaneously, supporting the growth and development of one's self-esteem are defined to be significant cornerstones for the profession of a teacher. In consequence, it can be stated that encountering the student on an individual level requires a conscious emphasis on the matter.

10.4 THE ROLE OF INTERACTIVE FEEDBACK

As it was aforementioned, the importance of taking a student into account at an individual level seems to be noteworthy from the viewpoint of motivating and affecting the attitudes of students.

When the data of the present study is considered, it can, however, be concluded on the basis of the findings that whether the teacher referred to the class as a whole when giving feedback or gave personified feedback, the students seemed to become rather motivated in either way. Consequently, it can perhaps be stated that no matter what kind of an attention the teacher gives to his or her students, the fact that the students are noticed by their teacher – one way or another – seems to have a positive effect on the attitudes towards the learning process.

On the basis of the findings of the present study, the positive outcome was observed via an increase in the classroom activity. For example, at first there might have been a situation where only a few students raised their hands after the teacher had presented a question. Then, the teacher consciously mentioned

about raising hands by appealing to the students as a unanimous class and, suddenly, the number of students raising their hands had increased. According to Törmä (2011: 180), the teacher manages to support the holistic growth of students when enabling them to participate in the feedback-giving, and, indeed, the aforementioned example can be regarded as one way of activating the receiver of feedback.

However, it can be argued that when a student gets personified, individual feedback, the mutual relationship between a teacher and a student enhances and deepens. What is more, it can be considered to be highly likely that when a child gets feedback that is solely indicated to his- or herself, the given feedback may have an effect on the development of one's self-concept. Indeed, perhaps it can even be stated that when a person gets positive feedback, it influences positively the construction of his or her self-image. The positive effects may, in turn, manage to alter one's affirmative attitudes towards the phenomenon of which the feedback was originally received and, consequently, the liking towards the phenomenon increases, as the person feels oneself more confident.

10.5 THE PHENOMENA AFFECTING ATTITUDE-FORMATION

As it was mentioned in the earlier subsection, in addition to the development of one's self-concept, the relationship between a teacher and a student also has an effect on the formation of students' attitudes towards the taught subject. For example, it can be stated that if there is a prevailing rapport between the teacher and the student, and the teacher manages to create an encouraging learning environment, the student is highly likely to feel motivated and have positive attitudes towards the taught subject.

When the findings of the present study are considered, it seemed rather obvious that majority of the students regarded their English teacher as a nice person (see also Wright 1999). The observation was made on the basis of the prevailing

atmospheres in the classrooms, as well as the descriptions given in questionnaires and interviews.

Moreover, since in the cases two out of three the English teacher was also the students' class teacher, the students seemed to feel pleased and appreciate the fact. Perhaps, due to the fact that the students' own class teacher also teaches English, the learning of English, as well as English as a school-subject do not become a separate part of a school-day and it may create the feeling of safety and clear structure. It is, however, to be noted that if English is taught by a subject teacher, it may also bring a longed break to the normal structure and be refreshing.

Consequently, it can be stated that whether the teacher of English is a class teacher or a subject teacher, it may not have a significant relation to students' attitudes towards English as a language. What seems to be more relevant, is that the relationship between the teacher and the student is positive, and the proficiency of a teacher is hold in high regard by students. In other words, even if the competence and qualifications for teaching English were sufficient, pedagogical knowledge, as well as the sincere encountering of students as individuals are also required (see e.g. McMunn and Butler 2011).

11 CONCLUSION

When the role of a teacher as a profession is considered, one of the most significant cornerstones is undoubtedly the aspect of assessment and giving feedback to one's students. Moreover, the role of continuous, student-centred assessment is emphasised and hold in high regard in the Finnish schooling system (POPS: 262). In consequence, it can be argued that in order to understand the effective ways for assessment properly, as well as provide teachers with concrete tools on how to carry out encouraging and supportive assessment, the aforementioned phenomena are worth exploring.

In the light of the aforementioned arguments, the present study was determined to find answers to the following points: 1) What kinds of different forms of interactive teacher-to-student feedback there are in English classes at primary school, and 2) what the relationship between teacher-to-student feedback and learner's personal attitudes to English is. The data-gathering consisted of triangulation; meaning the research question number one was intended to be covered via classroom observation, and the second research question was mapped through an open-ended questionnaire, as well as interviewing students. On the basis of the observation of English classes, teacher praise was used rather frequently during a lesson. The teachers were aimed at constructing a supportive and encouraging learning environment. Furthermore, teacher's expectations can also be regarded as a form of feedback (e.g. see s. 2.2.1) and, thus, the teachers often appealed to their expectations for effect, when requiring specific actions from their students. In addition, the different forms of corrective feedback were observed when being used during lessons. The elicitations and prompts were the most frequently used methods by the teachers instead of directly implying there was an error.

According to the results of the questionnaires and interviews conducted for the present study, the role of a teacher seemed to have an effect on how the learning of English is perceived. Indeed, children's overall opinions of English as a language seemed to be more positive if they considered their English teacher to be proficient, supportive and inspiring. What is, however, worth calling attention to here, is the fact that although the skilfulness of a teacher is highly appreciated, the warmth and sincere confrontation of a student by the teacher seem to have a noteworthy impact on students' self-esteem, as well as the general atmosphere within a classroom.

Indeed, the findings of the present study can be summarised according to the two separate research questions. The results are presented in the following table (Table 2).

Table 2: The findings of the present study

THE FINDINGS OF THE PRESENT STUDY	
1) Interactive methods for giving teacher-to-student feedback:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Teacher praise b) Corrective feedback (esp. elicitations and prompts) c) Teacher's expectations d) Personified feedback
2) The factors affecting students' attitudes to English:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. The personality and warmth of a teacher ii. The proficiency of a teacher iii. The instrumental value of the language iv. The feel-good atmosphere in a classroom v. The significance of an individual

When the analysis of the present study is considered, connections with the different forms of interactive feedback and students' attitude-formation were found. Consequently, the relationship between the findings in the two categories (see Table 2) is illustrated and summarised via the following table below (Table 3).

Table 3: The relation of different types of feedback and factors affecting attitude-formation

THE RELATION OF DIFFERENT TYPES OF FEEDBACK AND FACTORS AFFECTING ATTITUDE-FORMATION	
Teacher praise (a) & the personality and warmth of a teacher (i):	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The teacher manages to create a supportive learning environment by being encouraging and affable
Corrective feedback (b) & the proficiency of a teacher (ii):	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Students regard the way how the teacher explains and/or straightens facts as skilful and qualified
Teacher's expectations (c) & the instrumental value of the language (iii), and the feel-good atmosphere in a classroom (iv):	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The teacher appeals to the general expectations of what s/he awaits one's students - The expectations may affect the unanimity and mutual relationships of students
Personified feedback (d) & the significance of an individual (v):	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Making the student feel his- or herself important - The positive effect on the development of self-concept

Since it can be concluded on the basis of the findings that the sincere and warm relationship between a teacher and a student seems to have an impact on the way how students engage themselves in studying, every teacher should perhaps occasionally stop and ask oneself, whether there is something that could enhance the mutual relationship with the students. What is more, every teacher ought to pay consciously attention to acknowledging every student as an individual. In consequence, a teacher could ask oneself if there is a student that has lately been neglected or escaped the teacher's attention.

Also, when the area of teacher training is considered, the proficiency of a teacher is emphasised. Indeed, the various methods teaching, as well as giving feedback are covered and highlighted, but perhaps creating, as well as maintaining a whole-hearted and supportive atmosphere within a classroom is a noteworthy matter that should be discussed in a more in-depth manner.

When the different forms of feedback and the possibilities for future research is considered, it would be interesting to explore the effects of non-verbal teacher-to-student feedback on students' attitudes towards English. That is, it is to be noted that giving feedback in interaction is always a complete process where – alongside verbal means – the facial expressions, body language and the tone of one's voice are present. All of the aforementioned factors perhaps have an influence on how the received feedback is truly interpreted. What is more, since it can be stated that the classroom atmosphere seems to affect the general mood during a lesson, the impact of peer feedback during an English lesson would also be worth studying.

All in all, what can be regarded as significant is that even if the teacher had a high proficiency in relation to a specific subject, the warmth and sincere pedagogical grasp on teaching, as well as encountering an individual is needed. Indeed, in order to be capable of affecting students' motivation and attitudes positively – and simultaneously making the learning process more advantageous for the individual –, a humane approach on teaching is required.

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APPENDIX

Appendix 1: The questionnaire of students' attitudes towards English

Oma nimi: _____

- Lue ja vastaa **kaikkiin** alla oleviin kysymyksiin **huolellisesti**.
- Kysymyksiin ei ole olemassa väärää vastauksia!
- **Muista perustella kaikki vastauksesi!**

1) Mitä mieltä olet koulun englannin tunteista?

2) Millaista mielestäsi englannin kieli on?

3) Miltä englannin opiskelu sinusta tuntuu?

4) Millainen sinun englannin opettajasi on?

SUURET KIITOKSET VASTAUKSISTASI! 😊