

**“WE HAVE A LOT OF TOOLS, BUT THE SOIL IS NOT
GOOD ENOUGH” – REASONS BEHIND THE DIFFERENCES
IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE SKILLS IN FINLAND AND SOUTH
KOREA**

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<p>Abstract</p> <p>Suomi ja Etelä-Korea ovat molemmat usein erinäisten oppimistuloksia mittaavien tutkimusten (esim. PISA) kärkikastissa. Kuitenkin Education Firstin organisoimassa English Proficiency Index -testissä Suomi on kymmenen parhaan joukossa erinomaisen kielitaidon tasolla (sijoilla 3–9 vuosina 2019–2021) ja Etelä-Korea puolestaan keskivertaisen kielitaidon sijoilla 32–37. Miten tähän päädyttiin? Mikä selittää näin suuren eron näiden kahden maan englannin kielen tasossa, vaikka kaikkien muiden aineiden oppimistulosten suhteen maat ovat lähes tasavertaisia?</p> <p>Tämän tutkimuksen tavoitteena oli selvittää, millä tavoin suomen ja korean englanninopetusmetodit ja -tavat ovat erilaisia tai samanlaisia suomalaisten ja korealaisten englanninopettajien mielestä. Tarkoitus oli myös selvittää, osaisivatko nämä opettajat löytää syitä suomalaisten ja korealaisten englannin kielen taitotason eroihin. Lisäksi tutkimuksessa haluttiin kartoittaa, mitä mieltä opettajat ovat Suomen ja Korean välisistä koulutusvientimahdollisuuksista, ja mitä asioita tällaisessa yhteistyössä tulee heidän mielestään ottaa huomioon. Tutkimuksessa haastateltiin kahta suomalaista ja kolmea eteläkorealaista englanninopettajaa, joilla oli kokemusta sekä Suomen että Etelä-Korean englanninopetustavoista. Haastattelut toteutettiin puolistrukturoituina ja data analysoitiin deduktiivista sisällönanalyysimetodia hyödyntäen.</p> <p>Tutkimuksessa huomattiin, että englanninopetuksen haasteet eivät ole niinkään opetusmetodeissa vaan ympäröivässä kulttuurissa ja sen opettajiin ja oppilaisiin asettamissa vaatimuksissa. Koekeskeisyys, passiivisen kielitaidon painottaminen ja koulumaailman ulkoisen kielenopiskelumotivaation puuttuminen olivat keskeisiä teemoja kielitaidon erojen syitä pohdittaessa. Myös koulutusviennissä korostuivat erilaiset yhteiskuntatason haasteet; Suomen ja Etelä-Korean koulumaailman erot osoittautuivat niin suuriksi, että pelkkien kielenopetusmetodien muuttaminen ei yksin takaisi hyviä oppimistuloksia. Haastateltavat löysivät kuitenkin kehitysehdotuksia molempien maiden koulutusjärjestelmiin ja kielenopetukseen. Tutkimus tuotti tärkeää tietoa englanninopetuksen kehittämistä molemmissa maissa ja todisti, että opettajien näkemykset koulutuksen uudistamisessa ovat ensiarvoisen tärkeitä.</p>	
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1 INTRODUCTION

Both Finland and South Korea are often found at the top of different rankings that measure learning results in science, math, and literacy (such as PISA 2018). However, when the English proficiency in these two countries is compared, a substantial gap can be found. EF's *English Proficiency Index* (EPI) is a test, where the test takers' reading and listening skills are tested and then scored objectively (EF 2020: 44). The data is collected annually from over 2 million people, who have taken the free EF SET test online around the world. In 2020, the median age of adult test takers was 26 and split almost evenly in the middle by gender; 54% of the overall test takers were female. In 2020, English proficiency skills of Finnish people were ranked as the 3rd best out of the 100 countries that participated in the test ("very high proficiency"), topped only by the Netherlands and Denmark (EF 2020: 6–7). South Korea was ranked 32nd ("moderate proficiency"), but among other Asian countries, it was in the top 5 after Singapore, Philippines and Malaysia (EF 2020: 24–25). Both countries have improved their ranking from the previous year; in 2019, Finland was ranked 7th, and South Korea 37th out of the 100 countries (EF 2019: 6).

How did we end up here? How come both countries are equally successful on the global scale of learning in practically any other field except the English language? Can the reasons behind these results be found in the English classrooms of the two countries?

Before this thesis was finished, the results of the EPI test for the year 2021 were published as well; Finland's result was a little bit lower, 9th place, and South Korea's rank stayed consistent at 37th place (EF 2021: 6). What caused the decline in the Finnish results is unclear and is not the focus of this study since it is too soon to say whether this was just a one-time result or if, for example, the consequences of distance learning and other complications caused by COVID-19 in the field of education, and general well-being of the world, are already visible. However, this theory does not explain why South Korean results remained similar, since they, too, had to move into distance learning, but as mentioned, this is not the focus of this study.

The aim of this thesis is to find out what professional English teachers from both Finland and South Korea consider to be the main similarities and differences in

Finnish and South Korean English teaching, and how they think different teaching methods affect the English skills in the two countries. The aim is also to find out whether the teachers believe that some aspects of the pedagogical practices in Finland could be implemented into the South Korean way of teaching English, and vice versa, and if so, in what ways. Since teachers are at the heart of English language learning, they have the opportunity to see what concrete things should be changed, but also what is already working very well. Therefore, the teachers' views on the state of English teaching in both countries is the most valuable data when it comes time for the government to determine what developmental steps need to be implemented next in order to improve English education.

Second language learning and teaching are widely studied topics and will be discussed in further detail in the following chapters. There are some previous studies where the skills of Finnish and South Korean students are compared to each other, but the research focuses on subjects such as science or mathematics (e.g., Heo et. al. 2018; Lee 2010; Goodwin 2013; Kang & Keinonen 2016). There has been some research done in the field of English, where Finland and South Korea have been compared to each other, but it has focused on textbooks (Namgung 2016). However, the possible reasons behind the English skill level of South Koreans have been previously studied; Jeon (2010) suggested that a gap in the government's objectives and what actually happens in classrooms, and a similar gap in learning goals and what is actually tested were the main reasons behind the "mediocre" English skills of South Koreans. Jeon's research can be used as a comparison to the results of this thesis to see, whether similar issues are still seen as the reasons behind the English level in South Korean.

In addition to the missing research in the field of comparing the two countries and their ways of teaching English, education export is also a relatively new phenomena, and at the time of writing this thesis, there were no studies on education export where both Finland and South Korea would have been included. Furthermore, education export has not been studied from the perspective of improving learning results. Hence, my research offers new and interesting information on the differences in English teaching methods and the reasons for different English skill levels, as well as the future of education export collaboration possibilities between these two countries.

In Chapters 2, 3 and 4, I will describe different second language learning models and theories, including Universal Grammar, the Competition Model, the Socio-Educational Model, Interaction Hypothesis and Sociocultural Theory. I will also link these to different second language teaching styles, such as the Grammar-Translation, the Audio-Lingual, the Communicative, the Sociocultural, and the mainstream EFL teaching style, as well as the development of second language teaching and learning through the years. Then, I describe the history and the present situation of the education systems of both Finland and South Korea, as well as how English is taught, how the curriculum is taken into account, and how teacher training is organized in both countries. Finally, I describe the term "education export" and the current situation of the business in both Finland and South Korea.

In Chapter 5, I will introduce the research questions, the backgrounds of the participants of the study, and how I conducted the semi-structured research interviews. I also explain how I gathered and analysed the data.

In the chapter covering the findings, I will describe important themes determined during the analysis stage in order to find answers to my research questions. These themes include similarities and differences that my participants found in the Finnish and the South Korean ways of teaching English, the possible reasons behind the differences of the English skills of these two countries, as well as some education export collaboration possibilities.

In the final chapter, I will recap the findings presented in the previous chapters and go through the answers to each research question presented in Chapter 5. I will also discuss ideas for possible future studies that this thesis could inspire.

2 LEARNING AND TEACHING A SECOND LANGUAGE

In this chapter, I describe the general principles of second language (L2) learning and teaching, which is important background knowledge to keep in mind later on when analysing how English is taught in Finland and South Korea, and possible reasons why the countries have settled on their specific ways of teaching. In Chapter 2.1, I describe different ways in which L2 learning is viewed and how these views have developed throughout the years; the Universal Grammar Model, the Competition Model, Interaction Hypothesis, and sociocultural aspects. In Chapter 2.2, I describe four teaching methods used in L2 classrooms; the Grammar-Translation, the Audio-Lingual, the Communicative Method, and the Sociocultural approach, as well as a commonly used mix of these models called the mainstream EFL teaching style.

2.1 An Introduction to Second Language Learning

In the field of L2 learning theories, there has been a lot of development in the past 60 years and, therefore, only the most important turning points will be presented in this chapter. For a more detailed timeline on L2 learning theories and research, see Mitchell et. al. (2019: 63–76). For the purposes of this thesis, the term “second language” is used to describe any language that is learned later than in earliest childhood (Mitchell et. al. 2013: 1). Learning a second language differs from first language (L1) acquisition in many ways (Hawkins 2001: 345). When learning an L2, another language, e.g., L1 and possibly other L2s, are already present. The development of certain parts of the brain happens simultaneously to L1 acquisition, and therefore those parts have already matured when learning an L2. Furthermore, L2 input is usually different to that of L1, because it may involve both written and spoken language (Hawkins 2001: 345). The starting point of the following models is knowledge of a one language instead of several languages (Cook 2008: 231), and, therefore, the influence of other L2s on the learning process is mostly disregarded.

Early language learning theories are based on the Behaviouristic view developed by Fries in 1945 (Mitchell et. al. 2013: 50), where the teacher “pours knowledge and information into the student’s head” and learning is seen as behaviours that are based on stimuli and the learner’s response to it (Mitchell et. al. 2013: 28). Therefore, learning is believed to happen through repeated reinforcement by the teacher in order to create habits. In 1957, Skinner applied the main principles of Behaviourism to language learning (Mitchell et. al. 2013: 50); a certain language use situation requires a certain response, which is practiced in the language classroom. This can be, for example, a conversation that is had at a restaurant, which includes phrases that are commonly used in those types of situations. Building on the Behaviouristic views, the term Contrastive Analysis was developed by Lado in 1957 (Mitchell et. al. 2013: 50), who believed that the learner’s L1 and L2 should be compared in order to teach how they differ from each other and to identify what aspects might be difficult for that learner.

Skinner’s ideas were harshly critiqued by, for example, Chomsky, who argued that children can acquire a language by not merely imitating the language around them, but, instead, they have an innate language ability with which they can generate sentences and rules (Mitchell et. al. 2013: 51). This view is now known as Universal Grammar, or the generative linguistics approach, first proposed in the 1980s by Chomsky (Mitchell et. al. 2013: 61–97). The model is based on a claim that grammatical principles and parameters are built into the human mind (Cook 2008: 215). When learning L1, a child gathers input according to which they then apply the principles and parameters accordingly. When learning L2, they then modify those principles and parameters to match the new language. Although Chomsky does not talk about L2 acquisition, this theory has had a major impact in the field (Mitchell et. a. 2013: 51, 83–97). The model guides the language teachers to focus on teaching the aspects of syntax which are not acquired automatically by the students (Cook 2008: 216). This depends on the L1 of the students and what parameters of the L2 are already familiar to them based on their L1. Therefore, it would not make sense to, for example, spend time teaching the correct position of a preposition if the student’s L1 functions in a similar way as the L2 in question (Cook 2008: 216). Instead, teaching should focus on providing new data for the students, which they can then use to set values to unfamiliar parameters. Many SLA researchers in the beginning of the 2000s considered the Universal Grammar model as the most powerful part of L2 learning (Cook 2008: 217), but the Universal Grammar model is not the most dominant theory in the field of L2 research anymore (Mitchell et. al. 2019: 400).

A polar opposite to the Universal Grammar model is the Competition model, where language is seen as dynamic processing and communication rather than static knowledge (Cook 2008: 219; Mitchell et. al. 2013: 102–103). It was developed by MacWhinney, and it focuses on the importance of L2 input and how language is used. According to the model, communication is achieved through four different aspects of a language: word order, vocabulary, morphology and intonation. A language user is able to cope with only a limited number of things at the same time and, therefore, a language has to find a balance between the four aspects. For example, if a language

has a complicated intonation pattern, such as Chinese, grammatical inflections become less important in conveying meaning. Similarly, if a language puts a lot of emphasis on word order, intonation becomes less important. This model relies on the teacher and considers them to be a vital aspect that is essential to the learning process. Therefore, the model is related to the Behaviouristic belief that language learning comes from outside the mind through interaction, correction and input from others (Cook 2008: 221), and even though the language learner is expected to interact with other speakers in order to get L2 input, the learners are not first and foremost viewed as social beings (Mitchell et. al. 2013: 128).

Using the second language is beneficial and often necessary when learning it (Mitchell et. al. 2013: 160). The key idea of the Input Hypothesis, first proposed by Krashen in 1982, was that comprehensible input is necessary and sufficient in order for L2 learning to take place (Mitchell et. al. 2013: 160). Complementing the Input Hypothesis, the Output Hypothesis was proposed by Swain in 1995 (Mitchell et. al. 2013: 48, 161, 175–179), where producing the second language, e.g. output, is the only way that forces the learners to fully process the grammar of the L2 and, therefore, is the most efficient way of development. According to the Interaction Hypothesis, first proposed by Long in 1981, developed further by Krashen in 1985, and revised by Long in 1996, L2 acquisition is dependent on participating in conversations with native speakers (Tran et. al. 2009: 2; Mitchell et. al. 2013: 48, 160–163). In order for the interaction to be beneficial to L2 learners, the language input should be comprehensible, and if not, it should be modified in order to achieve understanding (Tran et. al. 2009: 3). A central concept in this process is negotiation of meaning, in which repetitions, confirmations, reformulations, comprehension checks, clarification requests, and so on are utilized by the speakers to produce a useful interaction (Cook 2008: 225; Mitchell et. al. 2013: 48, 160). Through the Interaction Hypothesis, teachers have acquired the tools of direct correction, recasting, requesting for clarification, elicitation, and repetition to aid their students' language learning results (Cook 2008: 226). These models have been criticized on the basis that since the learners are taught to notice errors and mismatches in their L1 and L2 forms, this prompts an idea that the learners will gain negative evidence and feedback on their own language skills and, thus, might feel the need to correct their utterances in order to get their intended meaning across effectively (Mitchell et. al. 2013: 179). However, these models, by taking into account the characteristics of input and output when learning an L2, have helped to create a bigger picture of how the students' memory affects the language learning process (Mitchell et. al. 2019: 400).

The models described above are meaning-based and do not take into account the social aspect of language learning (Cook 2008: 223; Mitchell et. al. 2013). The Socio-Educational model, introduced by Gardner (2010), explains how the language learner's individual factors and general features of society influence L2 learning. Gardner believes that the most important factors of successfully learning a language are the learner's motivation and ability. Motivation consists of attitudes to the learning situation, for example the teacher, and integrativeness, e.g. how the learner sees the

L2's culture. These aspects of motivation originate from the educational setting and the culture of the language learner. The society, within which the learner lives, has different stereotypes of foreigners and nationalities, which in turn modify the learner's attitudes towards them (Cook 2008: 223). Ability, on the other hand, affects language learning in a formal setting. The Socio-Educational model puts the teacher at a crossroads: do they choose to teach according to the existing social perceptions of the community, or do they attempt to reform the preconceptions of the students (Cook 2008: 224)?

The Sociocultural Theory highlights the importance of interaction from a different perspective; mediation (Cook 2008: 228; Mitchell et. al. 2013: 221). This theory was originally introduced by Vygotsky in 1962 (Mitchell et. al. 2013: Chapter 8), and the belief that a language is simply a tool to get meaning across is one of its central ideas. Through language, different mental activities and actions, such as creating a plan or solving a problem, can be achieved. A teacher's presence is required when the learner tries to understand how a certain collaborative task is done, and the term "scaffolding" can be used to describe the teacher's actions. The teacher uses supportive dialogue that directs the learner and helps them pass the point with which they are struggling in order to solve the problem in question (Mitchell et. al. 2013: 222–223). The teacher slowly gives more control of the task to the learner and the goal is that, in the end, the learner succeeds on their own. In recent years, from the beginning of the 21st century onward, there has been a clear rise in informal language learning (Mitchell et. al. 2019: 61–62). Young L2 learners often utilize the Internet, games and other means of digital technology to improve their L2. Furthermore, even more people learn other foreign languages addition to L2, which highlights the importance of preparing students for multilingual social contexts in their future.

Each learning theory - all of which are arguably incompatible - focuses on one crucial aspect of language learning, e.g. grammar, communication skills, etc., but the problem is that each claims their approach to be the most important when, in fact, they all contribute to the same puzzle (Cook 2008: 233). There is no overall framework for all of these models as of now, and theories which have attempted to include all aspects of L2 learning into a single model have not been succesful (Mitchell et. al. 2013: 285). All of these theories and models add up to a single question: Can a teacher combine useful aspects from each model into their own teaching? Some answers to this question can be found in the next chapter, where I will describe different language teaching styles that are based on the methods introduced in this chapter.

2.2 Different Second Language Teaching Styles

Since there are multiple ways in which researchers believe a second language is learned, it is only natural that there are also many different ways of teaching it. Learning a new language includes learning its grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation,

and writing system, as well as communication, listening and reading, not to forget the culture of its users and the social aspect. An L2 teacher needs to take all of these different aspects into account in their classroom. There are many ways and combinations in which the different models of L2 learning introduced in Chapter 2.1 emerge in second language classrooms, and, for the purposes of this study, they are categorized into four main teaching methods, each of which focuses on different aspects of a language: (1) the Grammar-Translation Method, also known as the academic style, (2) the Audio-Lingual Method, (3) the Communicative Approach, and (4) the Socio-Linguistic Perspective (Yule 2014; Cook 2008; Mitchell et. al. 2013; 2019). I will also talk about Task-Based teaching, which is an increasingly popular method that mainly follows the principles of the Communicative Approach, and the mainstream EFL teaching style, which has aspects of each of these methods. As seen in Table 1, each teaching style has its own strengths and weaknesses depending on what the style considers the most important aspect of a language.

TABLE 1 The L2 learning models that are the basis of certain teaching styles, as well as some of their strengths and weaknesses (Cook 2008; Yule 2014; Mitchell et. al. 2013; 2019).

Method	L2 learning models it is based on	Strengths	Weaknesses
Grammar-Translation/ Academic	- Behaviourism - Input Hypothesis	A large set of vocabulary and grammar rules to use as a base for language use	Favours the academically gifted students Does not teach how to use a language in the real world Errors are regarded negatively
Audio-Lingual	- Behaviourism - Input Hypothesis - Output Hypothesis - Interaction Hypothesis	Suitable for non-academic and non-analytical students Learning to use the language in appropriate situations	Isolated drilling of language patterns is not how language is actually used Can only be used for teaching certain aspects of a language Drilling can be boring Errors are regarded negatively
Communicative	- Competition model - Input Hypothesis - Output Hypothesis - Interaction Hypothesis - Socio-Educational model - Sociocultural theory	Interacting in the L2 Focus on the learner No pressure for the students on the correctness of the language → the goal is successful communication	Favours extroverted students Does not teach “correct” grammar → fluency is key
Socio-Linguistic	- Input Hypothesis - Output Hypothesis - Interaction Hypothesis	Interacting in the L2 with other students and native speakers	Favours extroverted students Requires the presence of a native speaker or other means in

	- Socio-Educational model - Sociocultural theory	Learning can happen also outside of the classroom Development of the students' L2 identities	which the student can use the L2 in a socio-culturally accurate context Does not teach "correct" grammar → fluency is key
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All of the models listed above view language as either formal, functional or emergentist (Mitchell et. al. 2019: 9). From a formal perspective, language is made of a set of elements, such as phonemes, which function under the influence of certain rules. For example, the Grammar-Translation Method and the Audio-Lingual Method represent a formal view of language teaching. From the functional point of view, communicative and meaning-making functions of a language are the core of language learning (Mitchell et. al. 2019: Chapter 7), such as in the Communicative and the Socio-Linguistic Approaches. From the emergentist perspective, language learning happens by learning to analyse the language input the students receive and extracting certain patterns from the input in order to "create" formal language aspects instead of presenting them as ready-made academic structures (Mitchell et. al. 2019: 129–146). Similarly to the functional point of view, his approach is evident in communicative and sociocultural language teaching situations. Now, let us examine each of these language teaching methods in more detail.

The core aspects of a classroom that uses the Grammar-Translation Method are texts, grammar and translation (Cook 2008: 239). This method's roots are in late 18th century Germany, where highly educated students studied grammar and applied this knowledge when interpreting foreign texts with the help of a dictionary (Chang 2011: 15). The ideals of this method are similar to how language learning is viewed in the Behaviouristic context, as described in the Chapter 2.1 (Mitchell et. al. 2013: 28, 50). However, these kinds of methods were not suitable for younger students, which was why the Grammar-Translation Method was developed further in order to adapt these traditions to fit the requirements of schools. The teacher controls the learning, and the consciously created understanding of grammar and the awareness of links between the L1 and L2 are seen as vital to learning (Cook 2008: 241). Students acquire knowledge, memorization is encouraged, written language emphasized, and communicative ability acquired indirectly (Cook 2008: 240; Yule 2014: 189). It is a popular method in secondary schools as well as universities around the world, and its primary goal is learning an L2 as an academic subject, much like mathematics or biology (Cook 2008: 239). Most textbooks still include exercises that are based on the basic ideas behind the Grammar-Translation Method, such as sentence translation tasks and grammar drills.

The Grammar-Translation Method, much like all of the other teaching methods, is supposed to prepare the students for the outside world, and by using the language in the classroom, the students will eventually be able to function in everyday situations as well. However, the method has been criticized for leaving the students

unaware and ignorant of how to use the language in the real world (Yule 2014: 190). This is why, e.g. a student, who has studied French at school for eight years, might still feel at a loss when having to use the language outside of the classroom. However, some researchers feel like comparing and contrasting the learner's L1 and L2 and performing translation tasks helps the learner to understand how both languages affect each other and, thus, learn to avoid making certain errors in their L2 or how to not repeat the same mistakes again (Chang 2011: 16).

The Audio-Lingual Method, developed for the communication needs between soldiers from different countries in World War II, was influenced by the belief that using a language fluently is the result of different habits the student has practiced (Alemi & Tavakoli 2016: 1–2; Yule 2014: 190). This basic idea follows Skinner's Behaviouristic views on language learning, as well as the Input Hypothesis described in the Chapter 2.1. The order in which the different aspects of a language should be introduced is going from simple to more complex (Yule 2014: 190), e.g., from passive to active, and from speech to writing. Therefore, the ideal order in which to learn a new language is: (1) listening, (2) speaking, (3) reading, and (4) writing (Cook 2008: 244). The Audio-Lingual style focuses on teaching the spoken language through dialogues and different drills (Cook 2008: 242). The dialogues introduce only a few new words and several examples of a new grammatical structure. The drills are then used to repeat and manipulate the new structure in various ways with different vocabularies (Cook 2008: 243; Alemi & Tavakoli 2016: 2). Finally, exploitation activities are used to ensure that the student can incorporate the structure into their own language use. The key is practicing and repeating the action over and over again, similarly to the different processing models described in the previous chapter (Cook 2008: 222, 245; Alemi & Tavakoli 2016: 2). In contrast to the Grammar-Translation Method, the goal of the Audio-Lingual Method is learning a language for actual use, but both classrooms are dominated by the teacher. This method is still used today, but as a part of a lesson instead of the main teaching method (Alemi & Tavakoli 2016: 2).

The "revolutionary" Communicative Approach focuses on using the language appropriately and is considered to be backlash against artificial patterns that are common in the Audio-Lingual Method (Cook 2008: 248; Yule 2014: 190). It originates from Europe in the 1960s (Chang 2011: 16). "Communicative Language Teaching stresses the importance of providing learners with opportunities to use English for communicative purposes and attempts to integrate such activities into a wider program of language teaching" (Howatt 1984 in Chang 2011: 16). Much like the sociocultural views on L2 learning explained in the previous chapter, this approach highlights that language always occurs in a social context and puts importance on communication in teaching and learning (Chang 2011: 16). The teacher does not dominate the classroom, but rather hands the responsibility of activities over to the students (Cook 2008: 249). The functions of a language, e.g. what it is used for, are seen as more important than the norms of the language, e.g. correct grammar (Yule 2014: 190). A typical example of the communicative technique is an information gap exercise, where the students have to solve a problem by communicating with each

other (Cook 2008: 249). Another example of a communicative task is role playing (Cook 2008: 249). The goal is to produce speech and convey meaning, not focus on minimizing the amount of mistakes the students make. This teaching style is also seen as a way of enhancing the students' Universal Grammar knowledge by allowing them to use the natural built-in processes of learning a language (Cook 2008: 250). On the other hand, this method also relies on the conversational basis of the Interaction Hypothesis described in Chapter 2.1 (Tran et. al. 2009: 4).

The Communicative Approach has been criticized because of its relaxed attitude towards accurate L2 production because meaning is valued over correct grammatical form (Chang 2011: 17; Yule 2014: 190). It is even said that the Communicative Approach is responsible for the erosion of teaching grammar explicitly, since the students' accuracy is not as important as fluency (Chang 2011: 17). The amount of freedom this method allows the students also calls for highly skilled teachers, who have to know when to intervene in the learning process and when to leave the students alone. However, in Asian countries, the method is also critiqued by teachers because it has caused the Asian education system to favour native-speaking teachers, since natives are believed to be able to respond to every language-related problem that might come up during the lessons (Chang 2011: 17). Native English-speaking teachers are discussed further in Chapter 3.2.3.

Task-Based learning, as well as Learning-by-Doing, are similar to the Communicative Approach, and have become the most fashionable teaching methods of the 21st century (Cook 2008: 257). In the broad sense of the word, all language teaching consists of "tasks", but in Task-Based learning, the word is used to describe an activity that focuses on meaning and requires the learner to use the language in order to solve a problem or exchange information (Cook 2008: 257; Yule 2014: 190). This goal follows the basic definition of the Sociocultural theory described in Chapter 2.1 (Cook 2008: 228; Mitchell et. al. 2013: 221–223). The students learn the language by using it, and unlike in the Communicative method, Task-Based language learning should come from the learners themselves and not the teacher (Cook 2008: 257). The goal of a task is to solve it and thus develop the students' communicative competence, and not to achieve a certain language goal, e.g. learn a grammar point (Yule 2014: 190). Task-Based learning favours extroverted students who enjoy working with others and the more introverted, quiet learners might not get to use the language as much and, thus, their learning is not as efficient.

The Socio-Linguistic perspective to language learning is one way to utilize the L2 learners' already existing interests in content produced in the L2, and use this interest to their advantage when learning the L2 (Mitchell et. al. 2019). In Sociocultural Theory, language knowledge is believed to construct through interaction in the L2, and culture and language are believed to be acquired together (Mitchell et. al. 2019: 364). This ties the Socio-Linguistic teaching style closely to the Communicative Method, however, the difference between the two is that the goal here, in addition to learning to communicate in the L2, is to take wider social aspects, such as context, identity, agency, and the learner's aspirations and motivation into account (Mitchell

et. al. 2019: 355–363). The learner is viewed as a social being, and L2 socialization may happen in different ways in formal and informal settings both online and face-to-face (Mitchell et. al. 2019: 337). Nowadays, many students “self-socialize”, either by accident or on purpose, e.g., the learner takes initiative in language learning, often in an informal online setting. In the classroom, Socio-Linguistic competence can be acquired, for example, through pairwork or storytelling tasks (Mitchell et. al. 2019: 344–348). Native L2 guests and traditional pen-pals, or “keypals”, are also an example of bringing the culture of the L2 closer to the students, along with the more recent addition of virtual exchange/telecollaboration opportunities (O’Dowd & O’Rourke, 2019).

The mainstream EFL style was originally a mixture of the Grammar-Translation and the Audio-Lingual teaching methods, e.g., a balance between learning grammatical structures, prioritizing speech, and using the language in different situations (Cook 2008: 263). Later on, it has also included aspects of the Communicative and Sociocultural Methods by focusing on dialogue learning techniques and familiarizing the students with the culture of the L2. A common lesson structure includes first presenting the new structure and vocabulary, then listening to a dialogue where the topic is included, and finally practicing the topic with the help of exercises and tasks (Cook 2008: 265). It needs to be pointed out that this EFL teaching style is considered to be mainstream in many Western countries, but not necessarily everywhere else. However, it is safe to assume that there are not many English L2 classrooms where only a single one of these teaching methods is utilized, and every teacher has created a mixture of these and possibly other teaching methods that works for them and their students’ needs. Furthermore, teaching methods are constantly evolving and teachers are always incorporating new and interesting ways of learning a language and activating the students in their classes. For example, the global shift caused by the COVID-19 pandemic of having to begin online teaching instead of traditional in-person language classes is definitely an addition that will bring its own innovative solutions to the field of foreign language education (see Kessler 2018 on how to utilize technology in language teaching). In the following chapters, English teaching practices in Finland and South Korea are described and the L2 learning and teaching methods presented in Chapters 2.1 and 2.2 will be put into the context of the real world.

3 THE CASES OF FINLAND AND SOUTH KOREA

In this chapter, the main aspects of the education systems of Finland and South Korea are introduced. Furthermore, I describe how English is taught, how the curricula affects language teaching, and how English teachers are educated in these two countries.

3.1 Teaching English in Finland

This section includes a brief history of the Finnish education system, an explanation of how English is taught in Finland and how the curriculum affects teaching. The education of Finnish English teachers is also described.

3.1.1 Education System

In 1921, Finnish legislation made schooling compulsory for all children aged 7 to 13, and in 2014, compulsory education ends when the student reaches age 17 (Jaatinen & Saarivirta 2014: 30). However, a basic comprehensive school for all students was not established until 1970 (NCEE 2020a). During the 1970s, politicians agreed that Finland needed to provide free education for all and Finns strongly believed education to be the solution to reduce poverty and inequality in society. However, private grammar schools were strongly opposed to the reform and considered it to be a waste of resources (Jaatinen & Saarivirta 2014).

Since the 1980s, Finland's education reform has succeeded in changing a mediocre education system into a system which is seen as a role model across the globe (Sahlberg 2015: 14, 78). This has been achieved with new education policies and a reconstructed teacher education, which was moved to university level (NCEE 2020a; see Chapter 3.1.3 of this thesis). After the recession in the early 1990s, Finland managed to create an equal education system, where learning results are similar across the country regardless of region, socio-economic background, or school (Sahlberg 2015: 20, 86). In contrast to other OECD countries in the 1990s, competition

and constant testing of students' learning results was not seen as a beneficial factor for Finnish education and teaching development, and it is therefore avoided (Sahlberg 2015: 71). Finnish special education model is seen as one of the key factors that explain why Finland has such high results in international education comparisons such as PISA, and almost half of Finnish students receive academic support of some sort during their schooling (Sahlberg 2015: 93; NCEE 2020a).

The Finnish education system consists of nine years of compulsory studies (Sahlberg 2015: 72–73; Schatz 2016: 57; NCEE 2020a), which is divided into six years of elementary school (*alakoulu*), three years of middle school (*yläkoulu*) and three years of high school (*lukio*) or vocational/trade school (*ammattikoulu*). In 2015, one year of pre-school (*esikoulu*) was added to the realm of the compulsory education structure.

“Education for all” has been the slogan for Finnish education policies for a long time (Jaatinen & Saarivirta 2014: 31). The system is based on the principles of equity, trust, responsibility, life-long learning and highly educated teachers – also known as the “cornerstones of Finnish education” (Orenius, 2018: 16, 20). Education must be free from the pre-primary level all the way to higher education, where students are entitled to study grants and loans from the government. The central government is responsible for approx. 40% of the funding and municipal governments for the remaining 60% (NCEE 2020a). Therefore, among other things, Finland has been successful in achieving high results in PISA without privately run after-school tutoring or a high level of pressure and stress on the students due to, for example, high-stakes tests (Jones 2013: 5; Hendrickson 2012).

In Finland, life-long learning is granted by making sure that every student can continue their studies in higher level education despite what choices they have made during their study path (Orenius, 2018: 20). Ergo, it is possible to go to a university even if the person went to a trade school (*ammattikoulu*) instead of high school (*lukio*). Schools are not evaluated or ranked by the government, and they do not compete against each other (Jaatinen & Saarivirta 2014: 32–33). The same goes for students: Finnish schools do not assign valedictorians or rank students against each other (Hendrickson 2012: 34–35). The only high-stakes test that Finnish high school students have to take prior to entering a university or a polytechnic school is called the Matriculation Examination, which measures the knowledge gained throughout the high school curriculum (Hendrickson 2012: 37–38). The Examination is often criticized for the washback effect it has on Finnish high school education (Pollari 2016). The term “washback effect” is described in more detail in Chapter 3.2.2 of this thesis.

Finnish schools use both summative and formative assessment. Summative assessment is a term that refers to the “traditional” way of assessing students' skills, for example, grades given based on test results (Hendrickson 2012). In formative assessment, the goal of assessment is to provide feedback and information for the learner, with the help of which they can modify and improve their learning (Dixon & Worrell 2016). Formative assessment can also include anything from classroom participation to assigned homework, and therefore the scope of what the student's final grade consists of represents their skills more broadly than in summative

assessment, where usually only test scores are taken into account. Assessment teaches the students to evaluate their own skills as well as allows the teacher to identify students who struggle with certain topics and, thus, they can provide them the help they need (Hendrickson 2012: 36–37; Dixon & Worrell 2016). Learning to self-evaluate and monitor the students' own progress is also what the Finnish National Core Curriculum states as the ultimate goal of assessment (Finnish National Board of Education 2014). Before 2021, the end-of-the-year report of the students' academic progress could include verbal assessment in addition to a grade (from 4 to 10), but schools have started to reduce the amount of verbal grading in order to provide more nation-wide consistency in grading (NCEE 2020a).

3.1.2 Teaching English and the Curriculum

After the Second World War, the English language began its growth into the number-one foreign language in Finland, and some even say English is now threatening the status of the country's mother tongue, Finnish (Jaatinen & Saarivirta 2014: 29). Until the 1970s, the Grammar-Translation Method described in Chapter 2.2 was almost the only method in which languages were taught and very little teaching was done in the target language (Jaatinen & Saarivirta 2014: 36). The Audio-Lingual Method, also mentioned in Chapter 2.2, was used after the 1970s and brought "language laboratories" to every school. In the late 1970s, the communicative approach (see Chapter 2.2) brought along a shift in language teaching, where developing the students communicative skills was the main objective (Jaatinen & Saarivirta 2014: 36). This method was a huge advancement for language teaching in Finland and is still evident in language teaching today. This meant also including the Sociocultural views of language learning in teaching instead of just focusing on the individual learning processes of each learner (see Chapter 2.2; Jaatinen & Saarivirta 2014: 36–37).

In the 21st century, it is taken for granted that English is one of the foreign languages everyone studies at school (Jaatinen & Saarivirta 2014: 35), and Finnish children usually begin their English studies in the third grade (The Finnish National Board of Education 2014). However, in 2019, the starting age has been lowered, which means that students begin their English studies during the spring term of their first year of primary school at the latest. One of the reasons behind this decision is that schools want to take advantage of the critical period of the children's nervous system development, during which they are believed to be more prone to acquiring new languages (HundrED 2021).

Early language learning in Finland follows the basic principles of language showering, a method, which was developed in Jyväskylä, Finland, in 2010. It includes activities such as songs and games, where the teachers use the target language(s) during the students' everyday activities in small doses called "showers" (HundrED 2021). It became an official part of early childhood education curriculum in kindergartens and pre-schools as well, which means that most Finnish children have knowledge of simple vocabulary and phrases in a foreign language prior to officially

beginning their language studies at school. Due to the globalisation of entertainment, social media, and video games, most Finnish children learn English even without studying it in a formal setting at school (Jaatinen & Saarivirta 2014: 37) and therefore, in addition to English, most kindergartens focus on introducing other languages, such as Swedish (Finland's other official language), French, German, or Russian, to the children with the goal of sparking their interest of studying languages (HundrED 2021).

The Finnish National Core Curriculum states that both mother tongue and foreign language teaching should support the students' growth as versatile and skilful language users (Finnish National Board of Education 2014). The students are encouraged to learn not only about their own but other countries' linguistic and cultural identities, which brings the Socio-Cultural teaching style (see Chapter 2.2) into the mix. Throughout the entire curriculum, the importance of strengthening the students' trust in their own abilities to learn languages and encouraging them to use even the slightest language proficiency confidently is highlighted. The curriculum also lists more detailed instructions on what aspects of learning a foreign language should be paid attention to. These include themes such as cultural diversity and language awareness, as well as language learning skills, such as communication, understanding and producing written language. The evaluation criteria and the level of language proficiency the students should achieve by the end of 6th and 9th grade to achieve a good final grade (e.g., grade 8 out of 10 or higher) are also included (Finnish National Board of Education 2014: 222–223, 351–352).

3.1.3 Teacher Training

“The objective of Finnish teacher training is to educate autonomous, professional teachers who build their practice on research-based knowledge and ethical values. The normative nature and context-dependency of teaching are acknowledged.”¹

Being a teacher is a highly valued and desirable profession in Finland (Orenius 2018: 21; Hendrickson 2012). According to the Finnish media, teachers are consistently rated as one of the most admired professions (Orenius 2018: 21) and this popularity also makes it harder to become a teacher, especially a primary school teacher, in Finland than a lawyer or a doctor (Schatz 2016: 64; Jaatinen & Saarivirta 2014: 32). However, receiving a high salary is not one of the contributing factors in the popularity of the profession, since Finnish teachers earn only a fraction more than the average salary in Finland (NCEE 2020a; Sahlberg 2015: 146).

In order to be admitted to study to become a teacher, an applicant must pass both a written test as well as an interview. Teachers receive a master's degree in their field of expertise as well as extensive pedagogical studies (Schatz 2016: 64). There is no way to go around these requirements: without a master's degree, one cannot be a teacher in Finland (Sahlberg 2015: 148; Jaatinen & Saarivirta 2014: 32). To become an English teacher, one can either first complete their master's in English, and then apply

¹ Schatz 2016: 64

for pedagogical studies, or they can choose to apply straight to the English teachers' orientation option (Sahlberg 2015: 156). A more detailed description of the components of a Finnish English teacher's degree is presented in Table 2.

TABLE 2 Components of an English Teacher's degree in Finland (University of Jyväskylä 2020).

Component	Bachelor's degree (180 Finnish credits)		Master's degree (120 Finnish credits)	
	English Language	Basic Studies	25+ credits	Advanced Studies
Intermediate Studies		35+ credits	MA Thesis	30 credits
BA Thesis		10 credits		
Other mandatory studies	Language research, language learning and teaching etc.	15 credits	Language research, language learning and teaching etc.	15+ credits
Pedagogical studies	Basic Studies in Education	25 credits	Intermediate Studies in Education	35 credits
	of which teacher training	11 credits	of which teacher training	15 credits
Communication and language studies	Mandatory Finnish and Swedish studies + other foreign language studies	6+ credits		0+ credits
Other studies and minors	Minors are often other languages or subjects that can be taught at school	64+ credits		10+ credits

1 Finnish Credit = 1 ECTS (approximately 27 hours of work)

Pedagogical studies include a number of practical training periods in the field under the supervision of different teachers, who have been working as teachers for several years. The training periods have to include at least one period in each of the education system levels, e.g. elementary, middle and high school. In addition, the students themselves get to choose where they want to do one of the training periods, and if they want to try teaching, for example, at a kindergarten or in adult education. During each training period, the students receive feedback from university teachers, the supervising teachers as well as their peers and students.

After finishing their degree, Finnish teachers are not observed or evaluated by principals or other supervisors, and they are relatively free to control their classrooms and lesson plans as they see fit. Furthermore, their hours outside of teaching are not controlled (NCEE 2020a). Teachers have many options to further their professional development and the average teacher spends seven days per year on furthering their own professional skills even though there are no financial incentives to do so (NCEE 2020a). However, during the past years, approximately 1 in every 3 teachers have considered changing their career, and this number nearly doubled by the end of 2021 (OAJ 2021). This dramatic increase is mostly due to the COVID-19 pandemic, but high

workload, the burden of work, and low wages compared to the required hours have been reoccurring themes when teachers' job satisfaction has been measured throughout the years (OAJ 2021).

3.2 English Teaching in South Korea

This section includes a brief history of the South Korean education system, an explanation of how English is taught in Korea and how the curriculum affects teaching. The education of South Korean English teachers and how native English-speaking teachers are regarded is also described.

3.2.1 Education System

Due to the tumultuous history of the Republic of Korea – referred to as “South Korea” or “Korea” in this thesis – the school system of the peninsula is influenced mainly by Japan and the US (Shin & Koh 2005: 3). Before the 19th century, the curriculum focused mainly on ethics education, especially educating the general public and building their moral character based on the values of Confucianism and Buddhism (Ministry of Education 2020). According to Confucian philosophy, the function of a teacher is to pass correct knowledge to their students and the role of the student is to not question anything (Han 2003: 2). This approach to teaching is similar to the Behaviouristic view (see Chapter 2.1; Mitchell et. al. 2013).

Korea's transformation from one of the poorest countries in the world to a leading industrial nation is widely credited to the development of its education (Jones 2013: 5). The foundation of the modern school system stems from the period of Japanese Colonial Rule. After World War II, the government began to create a foundation for democratic education, similar to the model used in the US (Shin & Koh 2005: 3; Ministry of Education 2020). Similarly to the Finnish model (see Chapter 3.1.1), the South Korean educational structure includes six years of elementary school, three years of middle school and three years of high school, which are divided into general, autonomous, and specialized high schools (OECD 2016: 18; Shin & Koh 2005: 3; Ministry of Education 2020).

South Korea has two different schooling options: the public and the private sector. Compulsory education, e.g., six years of primary and three years of middle school, is free of charge (Jones 2013: 6). A common characteristic of Korean schooling is the competitiveness of grades and appraisal of academic achievements (OECD 2016: 12). The *College Scholastic Aptitude Test* (CSAT) has shaped the Korean school curricula, where the focus is on getting accepted to a top university. Because the CSAT is a multiple choice test, the curriculum mainly focuses on learning facts and transferring information from the teacher to the students, therefore not allowing a lot of room for independent and creative thinking (Jones 2013: 17).

Jones argues (2013: 5) that the educational achievements of Korea come at a high cost, since they are the result of the intense discipline and work ethic of Korean students, which are encouraged and pushed by parents and teachers. A popular South Korean TV Show, *SKY Castle*, gives a brutal portrayal of the lives of students from wealthy families, and the competitiveness of Korean culture is one of the important themes the show highlights and criticizes (Pastreich 2019; Kang 2019). Although the events of the show itself are fictional, the fact that competition has created a high-pressure assessment environment in schools is a harsh reality in Korea.

An increasingly popular way to improve students' test scores is sending them to private after-school academies called hagwons; 학원 (Panahi 2019: 11; Jeon 2010). Hagwons are focused on academics, mainly English, mathematics and Korean, as well as music, sports and art (Jones 2013: 18; Jeon 2010). They are for-profit and funded by the students' parents, making participation in private tutoring correlated with family income (Jones 2013: 38; Jeon 2010) and sparking the term *English Divide* to describe unequal opportunities in English language education (Jeon 2010). This clashes with Korean education policies of promoting equal opportunities, since the ability to take part in additional private education is a determining factor in having access to higher education and high-ranking universities later on (Jones 2013: 39). In 2011, 75% of Korean students studied at private after-school academies in addition to school (Panahi 2019: 13). Korean parents have pointed out that if the quality of public schooling – especially English teaching – was improved, the students would not have to take part in private tutoring and this would reduce the socioeconomic inequality it causes (Jones 2013: 40).

3.2.2 Teaching English and the Curriculum

The English language has a tumultuous history in South Korea, and English language education still mostly follows the Grammar-Translation Method (see Chapter 2.2). Nowadays, English is considered to be the most important foreign language in South Korea, as it is viewed as the gateway to success, but during World War II, English teaching was forbidden in South Korea (Jeon 2019: Part 3.2). Among other things, due to the Korean government's concern that its citizens would be attracted to Communistic ideologies, a foreign travel ban was put in place (Son 2014). Korean citizens were unable to travel abroad if they did not have a government, business or academia related reason for it. Even then, they had to be over 30 years old in order to receive a passport. The government's concerns related to Communism were so strong that even in 1992, after the travel ban had already been lifted in 1989, Koreans were required to go through anti-Communist education in order to receive a passport (Son 2014). The government's decision to arrange mandatory English teaching in all elementary schools by the year 1995 and the revision of the university entrance exam towards a more communicative approach to language in 1994 kickstarted the English boom in South Korea, "English fever", that is still evident in South Korea as of today

(Park 2009: 52). In addition to these decisions, the possibility of foreign travel goes hand in hand with the rise in the interest in studying English.

Contrary to Finland's fear of the English language being a threat to Finnish, as mentioned in Chapter 3.1.2, some South Koreans believe the Korean language to be a negative influence to the students' English acquisition (Park 2009: 55). Korean parents want their children to be entirely immersed in the English language in order to maximize their language learning, and want to send their children to schools with no peers who speak Korean, since using their L1 is seen as one of the reasons as to why their child might be failing to learn English (Park 2009: 55).

According to Chang (2011: 17–18), the Grammar-Translation Method (see Chapter 2.2) is the most commonly-used English teaching method in Asian countries. For example, Taiwanese students associate games and other language learning activities used in the Communicative Approach or Task-Based language teaching (see Chapter 2.2) to be only of an entertainment-related value and therefore, are sceptical of their usage as proper learning tools (Chang 2011: 17–18). This view is shared by countries like South Korea or China, where English teaching is traditionally more teacher centered, and by certain students, for whom English is of a different value and the purpose of learning it is not in the hopes of visiting an English-speaking country or adopting its culture.

In the First National Curriculum of 1955, English teaching focused on a fixed number of vocabulary and language structures rather than communicative skills. Listening and speaking skills were included in the Second Curriculum in 1963, but assessment of listening ability was not included until the Sixth Curriculum in 1992. English teaching from the third grade onwards began in South Korea in 1997 (Jeon 2019: Part 3.2).

In the Curriculum of 2008, the importance of the ability to understand, use and communicate in English is highlighted especially in the elementary school level, and the main focus of English teaching is to learn to communicate in everyday situations (Ministry of Education 2008). The joy and the importance of learning through personal experiences are also a part of the elementary school curriculum with the goal of sparking an interest in learning languages. In secondary school, the cultural aspects of learning a foreign language are inspected more closely (Ministry of Education 2008: 42). Similarly to the First Curriculum in 1995, the 2008 English Curriculum also lists the number of words the students are expected to learn in each grade, as well as the length of the sentences they are expected to be able to use (Ministry of Education 2008: 45–46). Full lists of vocabulary, phrases and grammar to be learned are included in the Curriculum document (Ministry of Education 2008: 65–85, 89–129). Furthermore, each grade, from three through ten, has a detailed list of “achievement standards”, which the students aim to reach in terms of listening, speaking, reading, and writing (Ministry of Education 2008: 46–58).

In 2001, the *Teaching English Through English program* (TETE) was introduced. The aim of the program is to eliminate the use of the student's native tongue, i.e. Korean, while teaching English in order to maximise the students' exposure to the target

language (Rabbidge & Chappell 2014: 2), which was also the parents' wish (Park 2009: 55). However, research has shown that many English teachers in Korea, especially those who work with younger learners, do not fully implement the TETE program in their lessons and continue to use Korean to scaffold and aid their English teaching (Rabbidge & Chappell 2014: 2, 8, 11–12). According to Cook (2008: 233), the learners' L1 should be included and acknowledged in the L2 classrooms, because it is impossible for it not to be present in the student's mind. Teachers should aim to use both languages systematically in the classroom, rather than trying to exclude the first language entirely (Cook 2008: 233).

The pressure that is put on achieving good grades also affects language teaching on both the curriculum level and the classroom level, since teachers change the way they teach based on what will be tested in the SATs or similar high-stakes tests (Hwang 2003: 4–14). This phenomena, called the washback effect, was mentioned earlier in Chapter 3.1.1 and has been researched a lot in the South Korean context in terms of language learning motivation and learning results, among other things (e.g. Hwang 2003; Jung 2008; Choi 2008; Kim & Isaacs 2018). A growing consensus among teachers and students is that the tests do not reflect the students' language skills accurately, since productive language skills are not tested (Choi 2008).

To battle the lack of productive language skills testing, the *National English Ability Test*, NEAT, was developed and it was supposed to replace the SAT English test altogether (Shin 2019). NEAT would also assess listening and reading skills and it was praised for its possible positive washback effect on English teaching. However, due to concerns and problems reported by the media in the development stages of the test, the plan to use NEAT as a mandatory test in public schools by 2016 was suspended in 2014 (Shin 2019; Jung & Jung 2014). Public concerns included worries that the new test would increase the need for private education even further, and that the policymakers did not make enough preparations on how this new test would be implemented, since many teachers do not feel confident to teach English speaking and writing skills (Jung & Jung 2014). Furthermore, parents and teachers question the fairness of evaluation standards and methods used to evaluate productive language skills (Jung & Jung 2014).

3.2.3 Teacher Training and Native English-Speaking Teachers

In South Korea, teachers are respected authorities and their knowledge is unquestioned (Han 2003: 2). Teachers' salaries are also very high compared to other OECD countries (NCEE 2020b; Jones 2013: 17). To become an English teacher in South Korea, a four-year long undergraduate degree and a teacher's certificate are required. About 2/3 of the teaching degree consists of credits from the teacher's subject major, in this case English, and the rest, 1/3 of the credits, come from pedagogical courses (NCEE 2020b). An example of the components of a Korean English teacher's degree can be found in Table 3.

TABLE 3 Components of an English teacher's degree in South Korea (Korea University 2017).

Component	Undergraduate degree (140 Korean credits)	
General Education (required)	Thinking and Writing (two courses), Academic English (two courses)	8 credits
Core General Education	Choose 3: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • World Cultures • Historical Investigation • Literature & Art • Ethics & Ideas • Sociological Studies • Science & Technology • Quantitative Research 	9 credits
Major (Basic)	English courses + Educational Theory (required for the teacher's certificate)	21 + 9 credits
	Electives	21 credits
Major (Advanced)	Electives	24 credits
Teacher's Certificate Program		22 credits
Other Courses		26 credits

According to the Department of English Language Education at Korea University (2017), the main goals of the English courses include developing the teachers' own language skills, learning about British and American cultures through literature, and mastering theories and practices of English language teaching. Pedagogical courses include, for example, educational theory, current social issues in the field of education and practical training (Korea University 2017; NCEE 2020b). The length of the practical training is typically 4–10 weeks and includes, e.g., observation, teaching and administrative work practice. Once a teacher has completed their training, they receive a Grade II certificate, without which they cannot be hired by a school. However, this certificate is not enough on its own, and teachers also have to take a very competitive national employment exam, where they are screened and ranked based on their scores before they can apply for a teaching position (NCEE 2020b).

Once a teacher is hired, they have to complete a three-part school-based induction, which consists of a two-week long pre-employment training, six-month long post-employment training, and a two-week long follow-up training designed to help the new teachers to get more familiar with the job (NCEE 2020b). The pre-employment training period focuses on the practical elements of the job, such as classroom management. Post-employment training, among other things, includes guidance and evaluation provided by principals, vice principals and mentors, as well as classroom supervision and student guidance. The follow-up training period includes presentations, reports and peer discussions, where the new teachers share what they have learned. After three years of teaching experience and appropriate

qualifications, a teacher can be upgraded to Grade I certification, which allows them to apply for, e.g., principal or Master Teacher positions (NCEE 2020b).

Following the rules prescribed by the Ministry of Education and municipal education offices, all primary and secondary level teachers in Korea, working both in public and private institutions, are appraised annually, regardless of the status of their current contract (OECD 2016: 12). Both the teachers' performance and their speciality are evaluated by school leaders, colleagues, students, and parents. The goal is to improve learning environments and outcomes for students and according to PISA 2012 (in OECD 2016: 12), compared to the average of 50.4% of schools, 85.3% of Korean schools reported using these student assessment results to analyse the teachers' effectiveness.

In South Korea, native English-speaking teachers are often preferred or considered superior (Howard 2019: 1478). A "white" native English teacher is also often seen as an accomplishment or a symbol of prestige for the school due to wanting to be associated with the "face of the English language in South Korea" (Panahi 2019: 16). Their language competence is often prioritized over their pedagogical skills; to become a native English-speaking English teacher in South Korea, a bachelor's degree – from any given field – is often the only academic requirement (Jambor 2010: 1; Howard 2019: 1478). In addition to a BA, a TEFL = *Teaching English as a Foreign Language*, TESOL = *Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages*, or CELTA = *Certificate in English Language Teaching to Adults* certification is required by some schools and can be attained in approximately four weeks or less (Jambor 2010: 1). In addition to this, teachers are required to have a passport from Korea or one of the pre-approved English-speaking nations – USA, Canada, UK, Ireland, New Zealand, South Africa, or Australia (Panahi 2019: 7).

Due to the low pedagogical skills of most foreign English teachers, they are often considered to be unqualified and that "speaking English fluently doesn't necessarily mean they can teach English well" (Jambor 2010: 9). Because of this, expatriate English teachers are paid substantially less. Native English-speaking teachers are not required to speak Korean and the use of Korean in the classroom is often entirely denied (refer to the TETE program mentioned in Chapter 3.2.2). Therefore, Korean English teachers are often hired, in addition to native teachers, to teach grammar and reading to the students in their L1, e.g. Korean (Panahi 2019: 14).

4 EDUCATION EXPORT

In this chapter, the term education export is introduced and some history of education export in Finland and South Korea is included.

According to Schatz (2016: 21), the concept of education export can be defined as “an international business transaction concerning degrees, educational practices, services and materials from one country to another”. In 2012, the UK, the US and Australia were considered to be the three leading countries in the field of education export, thus creating a position of power for English-speaking countries in the field. In these countries, the focus of education export is on student recruitment, therefore making “education import” a more suitable term (Delahunty et. al. 2018: 27). Finland’s education export sector is considered to be a unique case in many ways (Schatz 2016: 17), and due to having no colonial history, Finland’s education export sector is relatively new.

The Finnish Ministry of Education and Culture defines education export as “the sale of educational services to foreign-based businesses or individual persons, in the private sectors, or public sector representatives or organisations, which can also include any training which is ‘tailored’ to the customer’s needs which is held in Finland, wherein the customer, or entity responsible for payment is foreign” (Delahunty et. al. 2018: 27). This definition has resulted in a variety of different education export “products” making it difficult to define the field (Schatz 2016: 17). Unlike other countries, whose education export focuses on higher education, Finland focuses on basic education due to its success in PISA tests (Schatz 2016: 17). Even though PISA tests only measure the students’ competence in math, science and literacy, they do give a comprehensive overview of the overall state of a country’s education system. After the PISA results in the early 2000s, the entire world wanted to know what was behind Finland’s success and even despite the decline of Finland’s PISA results in 2009, 2012 and 2015, the Finnish brand of education export has remained strong (Orenius 2018: 7). What is it that attracts professionals from across the world to learn from Finland?

As mentioned in Chapter 3.1.3, Finnish teachers are required to have a master’s degree and the competition of getting accepted into a teacher training program is

fierce. According to Sahlberg (2015: 177), improving the quality of teaching has been one of the crucial factors in the improvement of Finnish education. However, having good teachers is not enough on its own. Two thirds of the differences in students' learning outcomes are caused by things that happen outside of the school, such as socio-economic and socio-cultural factors, as well as personality traits. Therefore, even a great teacher is unable to influence these factors (Sahlberg 2015: 178). These can also be referred to as "silent factors", since they are often overshadowed by innovative learning environments, technology, curriculum, and so on (Sahlberg 2015: 243). Furthermore, instead of relying on one good teacher, the whole faculty should be working together towards a common goal (Sahlberg 2015: 178–179). Finally, the factors outside of the school should create an environment, where the teachers are supported and they can implement their professionalism and experiences into their teaching, instead of having to work with an out-of-date model or in constant fear of punishment for possible failures (Sahlberg 2015: 181).

Nordic concepts in general are very popular in South Korea, but, at the time of writing this thesis, there was no record of Finnish education export specifically in the field of English teaching in South Korea. However, the renewal of the credit system of Korean high schools was largely inspired by the models used in, e.g., Finland and the US (Kang 2019). The current credit system in South Korea allows a student to graduate as long as they have attended school for three years and the amount of courses they have completed is not important. The goal of introducing a system in which a certain amount of credits has to be collected but students can freely choose the subjects and the courses they want to take, is to reduce competitiveness over university entrance exams and encourage the students to choose courses that will interest and motivate them, as well as give them a sense of autonomy over their study path. According to the current plans of the government, the reactions of over a hundred test schools have been positive and the credit system will be fully implemented around South Korea in the year 2025 (Kang 2019).

In addition to the development in the high school sector, the Finnish early education model has also been introduced around the world by an education export company called HEI Schools, which has three schools in three different locations in Seoul, South Korea (HEI Schools 2019). The concept of HEI Schools highlights Finnish values, such as lifelong learning and the well-being of learners, and allows an environment where learners can be independent, curious and confident. Learning happens through playing and doing, instead of the more traditional Korean way of testing and competing (see Chapters 3.2.1 and 3.2.2), which goes hand in hand with a shift that is currently happening in South Korea; parents want their children to be taught with better methods than they themselves were taught as children (HEI Schools 2019).

As stated in Chapter 3.1.1, education must be free in Finland, which makes the concept of exporting education for a profit a slightly controversial topic due to its mostly for-profit nature (Schatz 2016: 17). In 2020, approximately 300 companies and educational organizations operated in the field of education export, and a total of 385

million euros of profit was made in 2019 (Finnish National Agency of Education 2020). Education export has been declared a part of Finland's national brand by the Finnish government, therefore making it a government-driven initiative (Schatz 2016: 17).

In terms of South Korean education export, not a lot of studies or articles have been made. However, a program called KSP, *Knowledge Sharing Program*, was launched in 2004 by the Korean Ministry of Economy and Finance (KSP 2018). The goal of KSP is to share Korea's development experience and knowledge they have gained through the process of trial and error in the recent years (KSP 2018; Wonhyuk 2016). The program offers three kinds of cooperation projects; technical assistance, study tours, and policy dialogue with the other country (Wonhyuk 2016) in the fields of, for example, finance, economics and education (KSP 2018). It is mostly focused on collaborating with Southeast Asian low- or lower middle-income countries such as Cambodia, Indonesia, and Vietnam (Wonhyuk 2016: 145), and has helped the countries to battle similar problems that Korea has managed to overcome.

The Korean Ministry of Education (2020) has declared cooperation with other countries as one of South Korea's educational strategies: "The Ministry of Education strategically promotes bilateral education cooperation, in consideration of developing and developed countries' level of development and characteristics of continents and regions. For instance, it endeavors to identify strengths of education cooperation fields in developed countries [. . .]² to promote Korea's global educational competitiveness", making collaboration between Finland and South Korea a promising possibility in the field of English language education.

² [. . .] = something was excluded from the citation.

5 RESEARCH DESIGN

In this chapter, the research aims and questions of my thesis are introduced. Furthermore, the participants of my study are introduced, and the methods of data collection and analysis I have utilized in this thesis are presented.

5.1 Research Aims and Questions

The aim of my study is to find out what Finnish and South Korean English teachers consider as strengths and weaknesses of both countries in terms of their methods of teaching English, and if the teachers think certain methods could be incorporated, in the spirit of education export, in the education system of the other country in order to improve their language teaching practices.

My research questions are as follows:

1. How do Finnish and South Korean English teachers describe the Finnish and the South Korean ways of teaching English? How do they differ from each other?
2. What do the teachers see as possible reasons behind the differences in Finnish and South Korean English proficiency test results?
3. In the teachers' view, are there any Finnish English teaching methods that could benefit South Korean English teaching, and vice versa?

With the first research question, I aim to find out what English teachers from both countries think the similarities and the differences in Finnish and South Korean ways of teaching English are. What do the teachers do differently in these two countries? How is the curriculum acknowledged and does it control what is taught and what teaching methods are used during the lessons? What knowledge is considered important to learn and is this evident in teaching? Are some parts of language learning (e.g., listening, speaking, reading and writing) considered less important than others?

With the second research question, I aim to find concrete examples that the teachers consider to be the possible reasons behind the differences in Finnish and South Korean English proficiency test results. Can these reasons be found in the classroom and teaching methods, or in the surrounding society? Are teachers and their ways of teaching, the curriculums, student-teacher relationships or the hierarchical setting of the society responsible for the differences in language proficiency skills, or are there some other contributing factors?

Finally, with the third research question, I aim to map some possible aspects in which education export collaboration between Finland and South Korea could further develop the teaching of English in both countries. What Finnish aspects, if any, do the teachers think could be beneficial to add to the South Korean way of teaching English and vice versa? Which of these aspects are easier to “change” and modify gradually, and what aspects require more work? Do Finnish teachers find certain South Korean customs more effective than the Finnish ones, and vice versa?

5.2 Data and Methods

In this section, I introduce the two Finnish and three South Korean participants I interviewed for my study. I also describe how I collected my data and how the data were analysed.

5.2.1 Participants

To be able to answer the research questions, two Finnish and three Korean English teachers were interviewed. In order to protect their anonymity, they will hereby be referred to as FIN1, FIN2, KOR1, KOR2 and KOR3. One of the Finnish participants was found via my personal connections and the other from a Facebook group for Finnish people living in Korea. The Korean participants were contacted via a Korean contact person. In order to gather useful data that could offer answers to my research questions described above, the Finnish participants were chosen based on their knowledge and experiences on how English is taught in Korea, and correspondingly, the Korean participants had to have some previous knowledge about the English teaching methods used in Finland. All of the participants will be addressed as “they”, since the knowledge of their genders is irrelevant for the purposes of this study. In Table 4, the backgrounds of the participants are introduced.

TABLE 4 Participants' background information.

	Educational Background	Relation to Finland	Relation to South Korea
FIN1	Bachelor's degree from an English university, master's degree from a Korean university, TEFL Certificate	Had a dual citizenship (FIN + USA), currently a citizen of the US	Taught English at a hagwon, master's degree from a Korean university
FIN2	Master's degree from a Finnish university (English teacher)	Finnish citizen, currently studying to become an English teacher	Exchange year (minor: Korean studies), worked as an English tutor in South Korea
KOR1	Degree from a South Korean university (English teacher), master's degree from Finland, working on their PhD	Completed an international master's programme in Finland, currently a PhD student at a Finnish university	South Korean citizen, teaches English in a Korean middle school
KOR2	Degree from a South Korean university (English teacher), master's degree from Finland	Master's degree from a Finnish university	South Korean citizen, teaches English in a Korean middle school
KOR3	Degree from a South Korean university (English teacher), working on their PhD from a Finnish university	Has been living in Finland since 2016, currently a PhD student at a Finnish university	South Korean citizen, has taught English in South Korea for over 15 years

As can be seen in Table 4, FIN1 has a dual citizenship; they were born in the US and have Finnish parents. They studied in Finland until graduating from high school and did their bachelor's degree in Korean Studies at a university in England. They then moved to China and completed a TEFL Certificate to teach English there for a year. After that, they moved to South Korea to do their master's in International Studies. The aforementioned TEFL Certificate also allowed them to teach English at a Korean hagwon after they changed their dual citizenship to the US citizenship only.

At the time of this thesis, FIN2 was doing their master's degree in a Finnish university to become an English teacher. They have no experience of teaching English in Korea, and would not be able to do so due to having a Finnish citizenship (as was explained in Chapter 3.2.3). However, during their exchange year (which lasted 1 academic year), they worked as an English tutor and took university courses on the theory of how English is taught in Korea. They also studied Korean language during their exchange, and used their personal experiences during the interview to compare the teaching methods that were used at the university with the Finnish methods.

KOR1 has an English teacher's degree from South Korea and they have completed their master's from a Finnish university in 2016. They have almost 10 years worth of English teaching experience in South Korea. They are currently doing their

PhD studies in a Finnish university as well as teaching English in a South Korean middle school. Both their master's and PhD research topics included comparing different aspects of Finnish and South Korean English teaching.

Similarly to KOR1, KOR2 has an English teacher's degree from a South Korean university and they finished their master's from a Finnish university in 2016. During their studies, they have gained some teaching experience in Finland and in Canada.

KOR3 moved to Finland in 2016 to do their doctoral studies. They have an English teacher's certificate from South Korea, where they worked as a public-school teacher for approximately 15 years in various middle schools and one high school. During their time in Finland, they volunteered as an extra curricular after-school language teacher for young children.

5.2.2 Data Collection

My research objectives are based on trying to understand attitudes and processes, as well as gathering expert knowledge and opinions (Gray 2014: 382–384; Harrell & Bradley 2009: 24), due to which my data consisted of four semi-structured interviews. Due to COVID-19 restrictions on travel and visiting schools, I could not include classroom observation in this study like I had originally planned. Prior to the interviews, I had prepared a list of topics and questions that I wanted to cover, which served as guidelines during the interviews (Harrell & Bradley 2009: 27; Gray 2014: 385–386). However, semi-structured interviews allowed me to go through the topics more naturally, in a conversational manner, without having to follow a certain order. In addition to this, I was able to ask the participants to elaborate on topics that seemed important for the purposes of the research objectives but may not have been included in the original interview questions (Gray 2014: 385–386). Furthermore, choosing interviews instead of a questionnaire allowed me to clarify the meaning of a certain question, if needed (Gray 2014: 382–384).

The data were collected in the spring of 2021, and each of the participants were interviewed separately. All of the interviews were conducted remotely via a video conferencing tool due to COVID-19 restrictions. Prior to conducting the interviews, the participants received general information of the topic of the study. The interviews were recorded with the participants' consent and the recordings were destroyed after transcribing.

5.2.3 Method of Analysis

My research approach was qualitative, and the interviews were analysed as case studies. Case studies focus on understanding the dynamics within a single setting (Eisenhardt 1989: 534), and due to the small sampling of data, the participants were chosen in a way that benefits the goals of the study, a method called "judgement sampling" (Harrell & Bradley 2009: 32). E.g., for the purpose of this study, it would not have been beneficial to choose participants, who have no knowledge of how English is taught in both Finland and South Korea (Eisenhardt 1989: 537).

The data were analysed by using the deductive analysis method, in which the answers that the participants have given to a certain question were gathered together and then compared with each other (Harrell & Bradley 2009: 100). Basic themes and subthemes were also identified in the data and the relations between them were analysed (Harrell & Bradley 2009: 101). Some ethical issues in my research include the fact that I am a Finnish citizen myself and have personal experience of how English is taught in Finland, both from my own school days and from my English teacher studies. Therefore, my views of how English should be taught are arguably in favour of the Finnish ways and may have had an effect on my interview topics and questions. However, my goal was to stay unbiased to the best of my ability, allowing the interviewees to bring up their own topics and views that they themselves considered important and relevant. My own experiences have also given me a strong background on the phenomenon I am researching and what to base my analysis on, which can be seen as beneficial.

By choosing the case study method, I was able to collect multiple perspectives on the topic and provide detailed descriptions and quotations on the research topic (Gray 2014: 163; Harrell & Bradley 2009: 115). However, due to the small sampling of data, this study cannot be generalized (Harrell & Bradley 2009: 115). It can, however, serve as a starting point for understanding this phenomenon, which can then be further researched later on.

6 FINDINGS

In this chapter, the findings of my study are presented. In Chapter 6.1, I describe how the participants of this study view both Finnish and South Korean methods and ways of teaching English, and what similarities and differences these two countries have. Themes that will be discussed are differences in teaching methods and education systems, free and for-profit schools, and hierarchy and the freedom of teachers. In Chapter 6.2, I talk about different aspects that, based on the answers of my participants, could explain the differences in the English skills of South Koreans and Finns, such as exams and passive language skills, English as an academic subject, English teachers' own language skills and confidence, and political issues surrounding education in Finland and South Korea. Finally, in Chapter 6.3, I discuss education export collaboration possibilities between Finland and South Korea, as well as possible challenges that should be taken into account when planning such collaborative endeavours between these two countries in the future.

The examples provided in this chapter are direct quotations taken from the interviews, but they have been slightly edited to ensure better understanding and fluency; for example, unnecessary repetition and filler words have been removed from the quotations. The Korean participants were interviewed in English and the Finnish participants in Finnish, and therefore, I have translated the Finnish participants' comments to English. The original transcriptions of the Finnish comments can be found at the end of this thesis (see Appendix 1). Getting the participants' meaning across has been the priority of the translations. The symbols used in my transcripts are as follows:

- [...] = a longer section is omitted from the transcription.
- [text] = words or explanations are added in order to improve and ensure understanding.
- **bolded text** = the most relevant parts of the interviewees' answers.

6.1 Similarities and Differences in Finnish and South Korean English Teaching

In this section, I will go through the findings that answer my first research question: “(1) How do Finnish and South Korean English teachers describe the Finnish and the South Korean ways of teaching English? How do they differ from each other?” The main themes of this section include comparing Finland and South Korea in terms of teaching methods and the education systems, the hierarchical setting, the effects of free and for-profit schools, as well as the freedom that the teachers have in a professional environment.

6.1.1 Teaching Methods and Education Systems

During the interviews, all of the Korean participants said that they did not notice any drastic differences in the methods of teaching English in Finland and South Korea. FIN2, having completed their schooling at the start of the 21st century, also reflected on how English was taught in Finland back then and did not notice a lot of differences to the South Korean teaching methods being used today.

Example 1, KOR2: “I think it was **pretty much the same** and because I know many English teachers who tried different things in Korea and in Finland [. . .] and those methods were not very different.”

Example 2, KOR3: “I **didn't find remarkable differences in the way of teaching between Korea and Finland**. [. . .] We want to use some creative methods of teaching, like communicative approach – we've learned a lot, because our English curriculum programme has been quite Westernised.”

Example 3, FIN1 (translation): “All in all, **I think the two were pretty similar**, I don't know if it is because I am a bit older so I don't know the current situation that well.”

As described in Chapters 3.1.2 and 3.2.2, Finland and South Korea have very similar histories when it comes to teaching English. During the past decades, both countries have began highlighting the importance of learning to communicate in English and are headed towards a very similar goal, Finland being a few years ahead of South Korea, which is clearly reflected in FIN1's answer; the stage where South Korean English teaching currently is can be compared to where Finnish English teaching was a few decades ago. The will to include communication skills in English teaching is present, but the methods do not fit in with the societal expectations of how a language class should progress.

Furthermore, the Korean participants talked about how they originally came to Finland in the hopes of finding out, what the “secret” behind the success and the reputation of Finnish education was, but did not find it in the classroom:

Example 4, KOR2: “When I first went to Finland **I thought there might be something different** and I asked a lot of Finnish people where did you learn English, did you learn English at school, and when I was writing my thesis I actually asked some university

students, who speak English very well, did you learn that English from your school and **many of them said I learned something but it's not all from the school**, I was surprised."

Example 5, KOR1: "The reason why I went to study in Finland after I participated in the teacher training in a Finnish University was that during that time I found that Finnish citizens are really good at speaking English. [. . .] **I found that the national education system and the school environment are really good conditions for English language teachers to make full potential of their teaching.** I think they support, and they trust, and they respect. [. . .] So that is, in my perspective the critical difference and that secret and it is implanted in the whole of society in Finland, the trust and autonomy."

As KOR1 describes in Example 5, in Finland, teachers are trusted, respected and valued members of the society. Furthermore, KOR1 thought that the entire society has had a great impact on this and that the trust and the autonomy the teachers are allowed stems from all around them and is not limited to the school environment. Much like KOR1, KOR2 also stated that they did not find the secret of the English skills of Finnish people at school and many Finns told them that they had not learned English at school alone. The effects of being exposed to English outside of the classroom as well as at school will be discussed further in Chapter 6.2.2.

Although the Korean participants thought that the teaching methods of the two countries did not differ from each other, both of the Finnish interviewees stated that especially the amount of repetition used in Korean English classes differed greatly when compared to the Finnish methods:

Example 6, FIN1: "**Repetition**, they do that a lot, they tried to get all of us native English-speaking teachers to do that as well, but **we preferred to have natural conversations in English.**"

The Behaviouristic view on language learning (see Chapter 3.2.1) is very much evident in the participants' answers. As FIN1 states, foreign hagwon teachers were also encouraged to use repetition in their English classes in South Korea, but they wanted to focus on teaching the students how to use English in a more natural setting and learn to converse in the language instead of simply repeating things without having to produce the language on their own. The topic of learning productive skills in English is discussed further in Chapter 6.2.1.

However, even though all of the participants agreed that the teaching methods themselves are very similar and therefore, at least in theory, the reasons behind the gap in the English skills of Finnish and Korean people cannot be found there, what actually happens in Finnish and Korean classrooms and how the teaching methods are utilized, differs:

Example 7, KOR1: "I have seen the Kahoot and also other that kind of methods in South Korea before I went to Finland, but in Korea, **we use them not like in a casual manner**, which means that we use that kind of method in show class and very special events like when the principle comes into the class, **but Finnish teachers use them in common classes.**"

Example 8, FIN1: "The foreign [*hagwon*] teachers came from many different countries and I feel like we all had a similar Western way of teaching. [. . .] I think that many students were just like 'Okay, **this is how a Korean teacher teaches and this is how a non-Korean teacher teaches.**'"

According to Example 7, Korean English teachers are familiar with Finnish teaching methods, but the difference is that in Finnish classrooms, they are used more often and in a more casual manner. According to KOR1, games or other more interactive teaching methods are used mostly in special occasions in South Korea, which indicates that either the teachers do not believe the methodology to be effective in terms of learning a language, or that they are simply used to the more traditional lecture type of a lesson structure and find it difficult to break away from that mold. This is similar to the views presented in Chapter 3.2.2 of this thesis, where the Communicative Approach is not seen as a “proper” way of teaching English in many Asian countries. Another possible reason behind this is the fact that since exams and good grades are very important in the South Korean school system and, subsequently, the society, the teachers feel like these types of games will not help their students achieve their academic goals and, thus, the teachers do not feel the need to include those types of methods in their teaching. This topic is discussed from the perspective of language teaching and language learning in Chapter 6.2.1.

In Example 8, FIN1 describes how the hagwon students are used to having different teaching styles and it appears that they do not find either one to be better or worse than the other, but simply modify their actions according to the teaching style of each teacher. There is a clear division, however, where the students classify the styles into two categories, Korean and “non-Korean”, which means that the styles do differ from each other to a certain degree. FIN1 also described the teaching style of many native English-speaking teachers as “Western”. It would have been interesting to see how much the students actually change their behaviour during the lessons of different teachers or if they themselves notice any differences in their learning results based on whether the teacher is Korean or “non-Korean”.

The importance of good grades and how this pressure affects the motivation of learning English came up in multiple interviews:

Example 9, FIN1: “I think that Koreans put too much value on grades, they are very worried about their exam results and **when we practice something, we do it for the sake of the test.** [. . .] On the other hand I think that **in Finland, practice is meant to be of use in real life,** it’s not only done because of the tests, that’s a rather big and important difference in my opinion.”

Example 10, KOR1: “That kind of a system **hampers the students motivation to learn English.** [. . .] It really has **a negative impact on language learning,** I think.

As FIN1 describes, one of the big differences between the two countries is the reason and the motivation behind why Finnish and Korean students want to learn English. Finnish students see school as a way to practice things that can be used in real life, whereas a majority of Korean students practice things in order to do well in tests. This topic and how this mentality affects learning English is discussed further in Chapters 6.2.1 and 6.2.2 (see also Jeon 2010).

6.1.2 Free Versus For-Profit Schools

The obsession with getting good grades is one of the reasons why hagwons are so popular and, according to some of the Korean participants, necessary in order to be successful in the highly competitive South Korean education system and society.

Example 11, KOR1: "I think more than 50% student take advantage of the private education, hagwons, without their help, I think it is quite hard to get a good score of school assessment. [. . .] **Many students have already learned the school curriculum in the hagwon, so every student doesn't depart from the same starting point**, which is not desirable. [. . .] Also, the whole Korean social atmosphere invisibly pushes students and parents to use that kind of private education and the private education pressures them to use them because of their own profit."

Example 12, KOR3: "As a public school teacher, it could be an excuse, but sometimes I have a lot of limitations and sometimes we have this bureaucratic workload and everything else so **I admit that we need them [hagwons], but we don't cooperate, we don't talk to each other although we have same target: the students.**"

From a Finnish point of view, hagwons are not as necessary or useful, especially in the case of younger students:

Example 13, FIN1: "The kids were in elementary school but the topics in their text books were clearly meant for teens. [. . .] They were like 'what do you want to do later in life' or 'what do you think about university entrance exams', but 5th graders don't think about things like that yet. [. . .] I started the pre-school groups lessons a bit before noon and my last lessons with the kids in 5th and 6th grade ended at 8:30 in the evening, **already at 11 years old, they study late into the night and it only gets worse by high school.** [. . .] I don't like the fact that their school days are so long there."

Example 14, FIN2: "I think hagwons are **a bit unnecessary and too burdensome especially for young kids, there are so many other ways to learn**, for example, if they had clubs or something, where they learn through having fun and they would not get homework."

As explained in Chapter 3.2.1, the goal of hagwons is to help the students to achieve higher grades in public school. They succeed in this by teaching topics to the students before they learn them in public school and this way, they will receive high marks in the tests since they have already learned these things beforehand. In English classes, this means teaching things that the students will learn far in the future, which reflects in the topics and the vocabularies that are included in the English textbooks at hagwons. The topics in the textbooks at the hagwon that FIN1 worked at included, for example, talking about the students' future plans, puberty, or their thoughts on the university entrance exams, which are hardly topics that a student in 5th grade is old enough to discuss or be interested in yet. However, because these are the vocabularies which they will have to learn at public school in a couple of years, this dictates the choice of topics that are included.

In addition to having topics that were not entirely age appropriate, both FIN1 and FIN2 thought that due to the students attending hagwons in addition to "normal" schools, the amount of time they spent at school every day was too extreme, a view, which was also shared by Jeon in their research (2010). In Finland, it is normal that a student in the 2nd grade is at school from 8 am to 1pm at most and they have the rest

of the day off. Even in high school, the students get home by 4pm at the latest. The students can choose to participate in clubs or other after-school activities, but these are rarely related to improving their academic achievements. When this is compared to how long FIN1 described the Korean students' days to be, it is clear why this difference feels rather extreme to the Finnish interviewees. FIN2 also wondered what the reasons could be behind the fact that even though Koreans seem to spend most of their time studying, and Finnish students appear rather lazy in comparison, the PISA results of both countries are still pretty similar. This was an interesting point but FIN2 did not come up any specific ideas to explain to the situation.

In addition to making sure that the students get good grades, the hagwons are also responsible for teaching the students things that they might not learn at public school. Therefore, hagwons are often responsible for teaching productive English skills, as was described in Chapter 3.2.1. FIN1 said that in the hagwon they worked at, the students had lessons with both Korean and native English-speaking teachers. The Korean English teachers were responsible for teaching grammar aspects and the lessons were mainly in Korean, whereas the teachers from other countries were responsible for teaching the students to speak in English.

These opposing opinions about the importance of hagwons clearly reflect the cultural background of each participant; Korean participants are used to a more competitive environment, where parents and students want to do everything in their power to further their academic success, whereas in Finland, the participants are used to the idea of "letting children be children" and highlighting the values of living a well-balanced life that includes other meaningful things in addition to school.

Despite feeling like hagwons are necessary in Korean society, KOR3 also criticised the private sector and its effects on the overall development of education in South Korea and was impressed by how the development of public schools is handled in Finland:

Example 15, KOR3: "Some Korean people learn something good from a Western country, but then they make money out of it because **the private education is a huge market**. [. . .] But what I have seen from Finnish education is, for example, teachers start a business of their own and then the government immediately notices it and supports them and **all the results will come back to the public side**. [. . .] You are always like improving and strengthening the public education, this is really good system."

As described in Chapters 3.1.1 and 3.2.1, education is free in Finland, and South Korea has both free public schools and for-profit private schools. It was also mentioned in Chapter 3.1.1 that when the idea of equal education for all was first proposed in Finland, the for-profit grammar schools were opposed to the reform. It is understandable that those who benefit from for-profit education are against changing it, and if the entire society considers themselves heavily dependent on said for-profit schools, it is difficult to try to change everything and turn the entire school system upside down. Other difficulties regarding updating the current education systems used in Finland and South Korea are discussed in the following chapters.

6.1.3 Hierarchy and the Freedom of Teachers

Another noticeable difference between Finnish and Korean classrooms, and societies in general, was the hierarchical setting and how students were expected to behave. KOR1 stated that the differences in the school systems were caused by the fact that the Finnish teachers were less controlled and could implement their own ways of teaching and assessing the students:

Example 16, KOR1: "I think the main difference is the education system in those two countries, **methods are similar**, but Finnish education system supports teachers to teach students very well and **they don't control teachers** to do some certain types of teaching and assessment, **they support teachers to implement their own teaching and assessment**, the goal is the development of students in language skills, but **in Korea, teachers are controlled by many factors**, like government, national curriculum and also the parents and social structure, so I think that environment is really different between those countries and **they have a critical impact on the different results on language learning.**"

According to KOR1, Finnish teachers have more freedom to implement teaching methods and assessment styles that they themselves think to be the most advantageous for their students. In Korea, teachers are heavily controlled by social structures, the government and the curriculum, as well as the students' parents. Korean teachers have to fit their lessons into the existing model and therefore, they cannot modify their teaching methods even if they thought the students would benefit from it. As is evident in the following chapters as well, the Korean English teachers have a lot of restrictions due to the current state of the society and the education system, which makes it very difficult to teach in a way they themselves find the most efficient. They are also often routinely and unconsciously teaching in a similar way that they were taught when they studied English at school. How English teachers' own skills affect their teaching is discussed further in Chapter 6.2.3.

In addition to the surrounding society, the differences in the hierarchical structures of these two countries are also visible in the school environment:

Example 17, KOR1: "**Hierarchy between teachers and students is really strong in Korean context**, because students cannot call their teachers as first name like Finnish context and they are supposed to respect the teachers so it's quite different, **Finnish teachers respect students quite much and it's really a horizontal structure between teachers and students**, it is really impressive for me when I observe their relationship. [. . .] I think there might be cultural differences but **the essence of relationship is all the same.**"

Example 18, FIN2: "There was a clear atmosphere that **the teacher was, of course, on a different level** and the teacher was not to be inconvenienced with unnecessary things, that's just the hierarchy. [. . .] I think that in Finland, it [*the student-teacher-relationship*] **is playful and things are not too serious.**"

Example 19, FIN1: "**The foreign teachers were clearly more like friends and the Korean teachers were teachers.** [. . .] Every time a Korean teacher came by, the students were almost a little bit afraid, because they knew that the teachers would speak with their parents and they might get in trouble at home."

In the participants' view, Korean teachers are controlled by the government and then they, in turn, control their students. People in the lower hierarchical level respect those

who are higher than them, e.g., students respect their teachers and the teachers respect the government. In Finland, the hierarchical structure is more horizontal in every level; the government trusts the teachers and allows them the autonomy to make their own decisions and this is then reflected on the trust established in the student-teacher relationship as well as in the classroom atmosphere. This difference was described by FIN2 as follows:

Example 20, FIN2: "The teacher in Finland, in my opinion, is there to serve the students, whereas in Korea, the students kind of come to listen to the teacher. [. . .] I'm not saying that Finnish students would not respect their teachers, **but it could be any teacher in that class.**"

What FIN2 meant by their last sentence is that in Finland, every teacher is considered to be equally good in what they do and, therefore, no teacher is viewed as better than others or more valuable than the students. In Korea, much like certain universities or high schools, some teachers may have a reputation of being better at teaching than others. FIN2 also mentioned that in Finland, it is common for teachers to ask the students for their opinions and preferences, and then modify the lessons accordingly, which also makes the hierarchical setting even more horizontal since it gives students the possibility to influence what happens during the lessons. In Korea, since the hierarchy and, therefore, the tests instruct and dictate what the teachers should do in their classes, the students, who in this case are on the lowest hierarchical level, have little to no say in what happens in the class.

The fact that Finnish teachers' professionalism is being valued and trusted is one of the reasons why Finnish teachers have more freedom when planning their lessons, whereas teachers in Korea, especially those working in hagwons and high schools, often have to stick to the textbook and topics that will be coming up in the tests:

Example 21, FIN1: "We had to go through about 3 to 4 pages from the textbook within the 45-minute lesson, and if we did not go through all of them, there would be no time to do it in the next lesson because, **every month, they had a test from the current Unit.**"

Example 23, KOR3: "There's one big difference in terms of the system, because I learned that **Finnish teachers can run their own curriculum each semester, so they have more autonomy** which we really don't have, we have a lot of limits. [. . .] **The curriculum says you have to teach students in a communicative way, but there has been huge discrepancy between the theory and reality,** but when I saw Finnish teachers, at least they have a lot of freedom to run and manage the curriculum."

However, in primary and middle school, Korean English teachers do have more freedom, because the looming SATs are not that close yet:

Example 24, KOR2: "Actually, in middle school, we are not very dictated by that test and we have more agency in doing our lessons, I think. [. . .] **I try to do my lesson based on what I believe,** so I re-organise textbooks and, yeah, it is possible for middle school teachers, but [. . .] we have a test schedule, so that affects our classes a lot, **if the test is coming, a month before that test we have to prepare the students, so during that time we cannot really do any activities or games.**"

Example 25, KOR1: "In primary school, the focus of English classes is the communicative activities, so mainly they enjoy games or other communicative activities, but as the time goes on and the students become middle school students, they start to learn the English

grammar and reading skills and that kind of stuff. [. . .] **It is kind of like step by step, in high school they don't deal with communicative activities that much.**"

Like KOR2 describes, their lessons are less restricted, and they can arrange their teaching in a way that they themselves believe to be the most beneficial, but once the test-taking season comes, there is not much room for anything else (see washback effect in Chapter 3.2.2).

Since the societies of the two countries differ greatly in terms of hierarchical factors, which also reflect on the customs at school, it is understandable that when the participants described their experiences in classrooms of the other country, the differences were very obvious to them and the culture shock was inevitable:

Example 26, KOR3: "It was very different, I wouldn't say it was really positive or it was really negative, like I cannot judge them in this way but sometimes **I was shocked that the students were like sitting on the table or something**, like I'm truly Korean so this cultural aspect made me feel really shocked but in a positive way, I could see that teachers, even with younger kids, try to respect the students like adults, so there was no hierarchy. [. . .] **I even had to think like will there be any teaching**, but somehow within this chaos I believe that there could be some order."

Example 27, FIN1: "I fee like **Koreans are very diligent students** and similarly to Finland, **they really care about education and they are really proud of their own education**. [. . .] I noticed that the students were very nice and did what the teacher said and when I think about the stories my mother has told from her teaching years in [*a Finnish*] high school, the things she has told me make me think that **these are two very different worlds.**"

As KOR3 mentioned in Example 26, they were shocked by how the Finnish students behaved in class and even had to think whether they would have a chance to do any teaching. This reflects the standard to which KOR3 is used to in classrooms in Korea, and like FIN1 describes in Example 27, the countries are very different when it comes to classroom etiquette and how teachers are respected. FIN1 also added that considering how horribly some Finnish students sometimes act, it would not be a bad thing to introduce some things from the Korean hierarchical setting to Finnish schools as well.

6.2 Reasons Behind English Proficiency Skills

In this section, I will describe certain themes that came up in my interviews to find an answer to my second research question: "(2) What do the teachers see as possible reasons behind the differences in Finnish and South Korean English proficiency test results?"

This section includes examples of how English is taught and what the education system and the societal situation are like in general in Finland and South Korea. Topics discussed here include the importance of exams, what aspects of language are the focus of English teaching, how English is viewed and how it is used outside of the classroom, the skills and the confidence of English teachers, the effects of the

competitive learning environment in South Korea, and, finally, some political issues surrounding education and its development in Finland and South Korea.

6.2.1 Exams and Passive Language Skills

As described earlier in Chapters 3.2.1, 6.1.1 and 6.1.2 (see also Jeon 2010), good grades and succeeding well in exams is very important for South Koreans. Because so much value is put on exams and grades, the participants felt like this way of studying can have a harmful effect on learning languages:

Example 28, FIN1: “I feel like with Koreans, everything they study, be it a language, maths, playing the piano or whatever, **they have a certain way of studying and I think it is related to the culture, that you have to just practice and learn everything by heart**, but when you’re learning a language, that is not always enough because **you have to know how to think when you are speaking.**”

Example 29, KOR1: “Standardisation in assessment stratifies the students and even though they are interested in English language, speaking, listening and writing, **if they couldn't get a high score of the English subject, they think they're not good at English language**, so that kind of system hampers the students motivation and hamper also their confidence in the language, **I think confidence and motivation are very critical in language learning but that system, standardisation, really has a negative impact on language learning.**”

In Example 28, FIN1 describes the Grammar-Translation teaching method in action (see Chapter 2.2). As FIN1 says, in Korea, every subject is mainly taught to be learned by heart and not a lot of room is left for the skills of applying or modifying the learned knowledge in different situations, which are crucial skills when learning to speak in a foreign language. The fact that only certain language skills are evaluated can have a negative impact on the motivation of learning a foreign language, since, like KOR1 said, the student might have good speaking skills but may not succeed as well in grammar-related tasks, which causes them to believe that they are not good in English in general since the academic results do not reflect all of the aspects of the language.

According to FIN2, the way Korean is taught differed from how English is taught in South Korea. When they were asked to describe how English is taught, they said:

Example 30, FIN2: “**Teacher says something and the student learns that by heart**, and in tests or group work, you did not really have to think for yourself, or you had to like apply the knowledge but **you were not allowed to think in a different way to the teacher**, they were afraid of that, like no, we will get a bad grade if we say that we think this could be a bit different.”

This, along with the previous statements, goes hand in hand with the results of Jeon’s research (2010); the types of things tested in Korean foreign language exams include little to no improvisation or applying the students’ knowledge and, instead, the tests include phrases the students have learned by heart, which are tested through multiple choice items and fill-in-the-blank -tasks (see SATs in Chapter 3.2.1). However, FIN2 described the teaching methods used in Korean language class to be closer to the Finnish teaching methods; they would converse in Korean and learn to produce the language on their own. Korean language was taught without the help of another

language, since not everyone in the class spoke, for example, English, which made the usage of body language very important. FIN2 assumed that the differences in how these two languages were taught came from the fact that the Korean classes were aimed for foreigners and the English classes were for Korean students. Therefore, the classes for foreign students were modified to fit the teaching methods they are more used to in their home countries and, in turn, the classes for Korean students remained loyal to the way in which they are used to when studying languages.

All of the participants agreed that since the important tests, such as the Korean SATs, only include reading and listening tasks, the teachers have to focus on those areas of the English language during their classes.

Example 31, KOR1: "Listening and reading skills [*are the most important*], because the exams value those kinds of skills."

Example 32, FIN2: "It doesn't make sense to practice speaking, if that is not tested. [. . .] Most teachers probably want to teach things that are useful for the students and therefore, speaking is not a priority."

This is one of the reasons behind the differences that FIN2 noticed in the ways that Korean and English are taught; the learning goals dictate what topics are included and how they are introduced to the students. This clearly showcases the washback effect in action (see Chapter 3.2.2).

Even though the development of productive language skills is somewhat discarded in South Korean English teaching, their extremely high level of passive language skills reflected the amount of training that they received in this aspect. FIN1 shared their own surprise in how skilled the Korean students were at writing already at the age of 6 or 7:

Example 33, FIN1: "I read their essays like I wrote like this in my mother tongue in maybe grade 3 or 4 and they write essays like that in their second language, English. [. . .] And I know that their parents help them with some things at home, but those essays they wrote at school, not at home, and I'm there like 'what?'"

If a certain skill is seen as important and valuable, and a lot of attention and care is put into improving it, it is bound to reflect on the outcome. Like FIN1 described, South Koreans are undeniably skilled in writing in English and producing the language in written form. If Finnish and Korean 6-year-olds were put head-to-head and asked to write an essay in English, there is no doubt which children would emerge triumphant. If the same amount of attention was put on improving the productive language skills and creative language use of South Koreans, the results of the English Proficiency Index test could be very different.

When the topic of the EPI test results came up, KOR1 and KOR2 suggested that the reason behind their good PISA results is that Koreans are good at studying and taking tests, but as described in previous chapters, they are not very confident in speaking and writing in English. Even though the EPI test only measures reading and listening skills in English, which Koreans are very good at, the fact that Koreans learn English mainly by heart and practice phrases given to them beforehand, they are not

as comfortable with words, phrases or sentence structures that they are not previously familiar with or having to be creative in English and, thus, they do not succeed as well in tests that they have not had a chance to prepare for in the way that they are used to (see also Jeon 2010). KOR1 also pointed out that the reason why Koreans cannot practice the skillset that is tested in EPI lies in the standardized academic atmosphere they currently have.

Despite the fact that school focuses on passive language skills, the Korean participants agreed that learning to communicate in English is very important. They also pointed out that even if they were to include more communicational tasks in their lessons, the students would often not be very happy about that because they want to use the lessons to prepare for the tests.

Example 34, KOR2: “The tests and the results are really important for students' futures and Korean English teachers are trying hard to make their classes more communicative and more useful for the students, but **at the end there is always the test** [. . .] **and that decides the students' future high school, future university.** [. . .] We do whatever we want during the classes actually, like we can try, but at the end we have to do something to grade them, so I feel I am really frustrated because we did a lot of fun things, but at the end, ‘teacher, you have to teach us grammar!’.”

Example 35, KOR3: “*[The teachers]* **cannot be creative, because of the SAT.** [. . .] So some teachers are like, okay I want to be creative, I want to make authentic English things, they have this will, **but the students don't appreciate it, because the teacher is not meeting their reality,** so there has always been a big discrepancy between reality and ideality. [. . .] I'm pretty sure that many teachers like me think that that's not really the way that they want to teach, but that's students' reality, so **they cannot ignore what their students need right now.**”

This washback effect can be found in Finnish high schools as well, where the students want to learn things that will help them to get a good grade in their high school Matriculation Examinations (see Chapter 3.1.1). However, in Finnish schools, this mentality only lasts for the duration of the last courses prior taking the exam and other courses focus more on learning interactional and communicative skills. Both Finnish and Korean participants agreed that the teachers' job is to, first and foremost, help the students to achieve their goals and if their goal is to do well in tests, this is what the teachers need to focus on. Jeon also stated in their research (2010) that in order to focus more on productive skills, the current style of the university entrance exams need to be changed first.

Both countries are aware of the fact that learning to produce and communicate in English is very important, but this awareness just showcases itself differently in the classrooms:

Example 36, FIN2: “Both countries are aware of the fact that **grammar is important** and that **language is about communication,** the awareness is just shown a little bit differently.”

As was evident in all of the interviews, Korean teachers are aware of the importance of learning to produce English but, due to the importance of tests and the hierarchical factors in society, they cannot do anything to change the way English is taught at the

moment. The politics surrounding language teaching and its development are discussed further in Chapters 6.2.4 and 6.3.1.

6.2.2 English as an Academic Subject

Building on the previous chapter, as well as Chapter 6.1.1, the participants thought that the motivation for learning and studying English is very different in Finland and in South Korea:

Example 37, KOR3: “When I see English through Finnish student's perspective, it's like a tool to play games or talk to friends from other countries, so they have more practical and more realistic, authentic reasons why they want to learn English, but they [South Koreans] think English is a purely academic abstract subject. [. . .] English has tended to become more like a gatekeeping goal, so they cannot really enjoy it.”

Example 38, KOR1: “Korean people have kind of a pressure to learn English, but in Finland, [. . .] I felt learning English is kind of like a cool thing and fun for especially youngsters, they learn English through games and movies and fun things, but in Korea, we must learn English for success in our life, so the characteristic of English language is quite different between Finland and Korea.”

Example 39, FIN2: “The value of learning a language did not necessarily come from having an inner flame towards the language, but rather it was because these days, you have to know English to get a job, English is also important because you can move abroad some day, so the language is valued as a tool more than anything else.”

As can be seen in the examples above, due to the pressure to do well in tests, to get into a respected university and, later on, get a respected job, South Koreans often study English motivated solely by those purposes (see also Jeon 2010). As explained in Chapter 6.2.1, this means mainly practicing reading and listening skills, which in turn do not help the students to learn how to interact with people in the real world.

As KOR1 and KOR2 described in Examples 37 and 38, as well as in Chapter 6.1.1, the “secret” behind the differences in English proficiency skills between Finland and South Korea could not be found solely in the classroom. In addition to the Finnish society trusting and supporting teachers, the students themselves have access to English everywhere they go. In Finland, English can be heard practically anywhere: people listen to English music, watch English movies, play games in English and so on. However, in South Korea, most of the entertainment is in Korean, and hearing English somewhere else than the language classroom is still relatively rare:

Example 40, KOR3: “Teenagers in Finland can be exposed to English wherever they go, they turn on the TV and they can listen to English.”

Example 41, FIN1: “In Korea, everything on TV is in Korean and they listen to Korean music and so on, so they get all of their English from school. [. . .] I think that it is difficult for Koreans to find English around them, but they have to purposefully look for it.”

However, along with the younger generation getting interested in social media and global entertainment, they will slowly start viewing English as more than just an academic subject and find ways to use it in real life:

Example 42, KOR2: "Well that's the biggest thing [*entertainment being mostly in Korean*], all the games are translated into Korean and everything, but I think it's changing because we're all more connected, right, so **many kids these days would listen to English songs a lot and they use a lot of English.**"

This change could also be seen by FIN2, who described their time as an English tutor in South Korea as follows:

Example 43, FIN2: "**Most of them just came to talk** so that speaking English would become nicer and less intimidating, and then some of them had, for example, an interview in English, and they wanted me to ask them the questions they had prepared for me."

A clear difference can be seen in the level of proficiency in English between people over and people under 20 years of age. The effects of the popular culture and wanting to be a part of the global society can be seen in the young Koreans' will to learn to speak and use English better. The timing of this change goes hand in hand with the lift of the foreign travel ban of 1989 and the changes to English teaching done by the government in the early 1990s (see Chapter 3.2.2).

6.2.3 English Teachers' Own Language Skills and Confidence

One crucial theme that came up during the interviews was the fact that even though South Korean English teachers have to pass a test before getting their teaching certificate and then have to take part in a yearly evaluation (see Chapter 3.2.3), they do not feel competent enough to teach productive language skills, e.g., writing and oral skills to their students:

Example 45, KOR2: "Many teachers are trying, but **some teachers are afraid of their own English skills** and kids are having more exposure to English but teachers cannot follow kids' culture, so **teachers should have confidence in themselves and try to learn how to express themselves in English** and encourage their students to speak and write in English."

Example 46, KOR3: "I'm so ashamed to say this, but **I don't remember learning anything what could really happen in a real classroom before I became a teacher**, I also noticed there is a big difference in how you have been trained as a teacher in Finland and in South Korea, **you do have this mentoring system and then a lot of requirements on sites in real classrooms before you become a teacher**, I think this is really good, so at least you are prepared, mentally, emotionally. [. . .] **This is something that I really want to bring back to South Korea.**"

This might be due to the fact that the teachers themselves have not studied productive language skills during their own school years. Thus, they feel like, in a way, their students are more skilled in this particular area of language usage than them and, in order to save their face and their respected place in the higher hierarchical level, they do not want to reveal the fact that their own language skills might be lacking in some ways. The current style of the in-service teacher training, and it not including productive language skills, was also one of the topics mentioned in Jeon's research (2010).

The lack of confidence Korean English teachers have in their own English skills came very apparent during the early stages of finding participants for this thesis as

well. I tried to arrange an interview with a Korean middle school English teacher, but they decided not to take part in this study. At first, I did not think any further of this since the participants have the right to decline at any point of the research project, but I later found out that they had, in fact, declined the interview invitation because they did not think their own English speaking skills were up to par and were ashamed to admit that. KOR3 also admitted that not wanting to reveal their “poor” productive English skills is especially common in an academic setting.

The lack of confidence in their own language skills prevents Korean English teachers from organizing tests or assignments, where they would have to evaluate their students’ productive English skills and, in turn, put their own skills to the test:

Example 47, KOR1: “Teachers try to test productive skills such as writing and speaking, but English teachers feel difficulty in conducting the kind of tests because **the standardised tests doesn't have that kind of area and also they are not qualified to conduct that kind of productive skills test.** [. . .] It is really competitive to become Korean English teachers but still they think it is really hard to believe they are qualified to test that kind of skills. [. . .] Teachers risk a lot in implementing those kind of test types, because **they already know how students and parents respond to that kind of assessment, they think it's not fair, 'How can you explain the result of writing and speaking?'** Teachers are very afraid of that kind of complaints.”

As KOR1 described, in addition to Korean English teachers not feeling competent to evaluate their students’ productive language skills, the students and their parents do not think that evaluating such skills is fair or that success in those types of skills can not be measured in any valid or controlled way. In Finland, a combination of formative and summative assessment (see Chapter 3.1.1) helps with evaluating the learners’ language skills, both passive and productive, in a fair and broad way.

As described in Chapter 3.2.3, native English-speaking teachers’ pedagogical skills are often undermined and questioned. FIN1 felt like the TEFL training they completed in China put importance on making the learning process more Task-Based (see Chapter 2.2), activating the students and getting them to use the language in a spontaneous way, but the reality in the South Korean classroom did not allow them to teach in the way that the training suggested:

Example 48, FIN1: “The TEFL course gave suggestions on how to get Chinese students to learn for example different phonemes and it had a lot of examples of different games that we can play in class and it did get quite technical. [. . .] **But when you actually start to teach by yourself and you are in a hurry all the time to just get through the pages, you can't really do any of that.** [. . .] They did try to promote Learning-by-Doing a lot, and when I was reading through the materials I thought that it sounded very good but **when I went to the actual school and saw how English is taught there, it was like the theory and the reality do not really match.**”

The strict timetable and other restrictions of teaching that the teachers have to work around in South Korea came up in multiple occasions during the interviews. All of the Korean participants highlighted the fact that they were very aware of how languages are learned and how they should be taught in order to achieve the best possible results, but the reality is that they do not have the time nor the resources to stray from the books and the topics that will be tested in the exams. However, as will be discussed in

the next chapter, these problems are deeply rooted in Korean society and their way of life and, therefore, a lone teacher cannot do much to change them.

6.2.4 Political Issues

Even though it seems like many Korean teachers, students and parents would like to update certain parts of their education system, these decisions are still heavily controlled by politics and government officials, who are not in touch with the current state of the schools:

Example 49, KOR3: "I have a lot of problems with the Korean government, how they manage the curriculum, it's so government controlled, all the money comes from there and one thing that I want to mention, like **they run a new programme or a policy with competition in mind**. [. . .] We have a lot of organisation levels unlike Finland, your hierarchy is a lot simpler than in Korea. [. . .] In **the upper level Ministry of Education they are politicians, not educators**, this is a problem, they have different mentalities, **they don't think about education for the pure sake of education, so I cannot trust them.**"

KOR3 also described, how the introduction of the Finnish credit system into the South Korean schools, as described in Chapter 4, is not an easy thing to do. The Korean government wants to implement the system in Korea, but first they need to organize some trial sessions to see, what kinds of results this new model will produce in Korean schools. The method will then be tested and every region in Korea will have a test school. The government puts regional educational offices in a competition and the winning region gets, for example, more funding. It takes a lot of time for the program to reach real students and real teachers and the government always works with one goal in mind: money. Therefore, the programs might not necessarily be the best ones for every school and every teacher, but they have to implement them in their teaching anyway, if the government says so. This, like KOR3 says, makes the teachers not trust the politicians and the decisions they make regarding education. This is also an aspect that needs to be taken into account in possible education export collaborative activities in the future (see Chapter 6.3).

When they were asked whether Korean teachers have an effect on what kinds of new policies will be implemented in schools or if they wanted to, for example, express their opinions about how the SATs could be modified, KOR2 said:

Example 50, KOR2: "I think it's almost impossible for now, **many people tried to affect the SAT test but they were all not successful**, it's a very complicated thing. [. . .] Teachers cannot express their opinions about how to change that test, it's not easy. [. . .] Some people [*in the Government of Education*] are actually teachers but that really doesn't help I think, **it's slowly changing because it's very political, politics are really deeply engaged in education still.**"

Once again, the hierarchical structures of the South Korean society seem to be the reason behind the problems in developing and modifying the existing ways of teaching. The reasons why all the Korean participants mentioned that they envy the freedom that Finnish teachers are is mainly explained by their own lack of freedom and the trust that the Finnish government has on their teachers. This was also one of the reasons why I choose to interview teachers instead of policy makers and

government officials: educational policies and government objectives might not necessarily match the reality of what happens in classrooms around the country, and the officials deciding on new developments might not have a clue about what would actually be beneficial for students and useful for teachers. This is why it is very important to give a voice to the teachers when it comes to education export and developing education systems, as will also be described in the following chapters.

6.3 Possibilities for Education Export Collaboration

In this section, the answers to my third research question, “(3) In the teacher’s view, are there any Finnish English teaching methods that could benefit South Korean English teaching, and vice versa?”, are presented. I will discuss the participants’ views on how South Korea could learn from Finland, and in turn, what Finland could learn from South Korea. This section will also include a description of some of the possible challenges education export collaboration between these two countries could face. However, only a few of the participants’ suggestions were directly related to how English teaching could be developed, and, therefore, this chapter focuses on wider themes surrounding the entire field of education in the two countries.

6.3.1 What Could South Korea Learn from Finland?

All of the participants were unanimous and agreed that Finland and the Finnish education system has a positive reputation in South Korea:

Example 51, KOR1: “I think Korean teachers and educational policy makers really have a **positive attitude towards the Finnish education**, I mean, they always say to take advantage of the Finnish education, so that's why we send principles and teachers to Finland and Finnish schools, really **it's kind of like a Finland fever in education.**”

Example 52, FIN1: “**Education is a very big part, it’s one of the things Finland is famous for in Korea**, it’s like Xylitol, Santa Claus and education are the things that we are known for, so if you want to sell Finnish education over there, just having Finland plus education together has a really positive connotation, they know instantly what we are talking about.”

Like KOR1 mentioned in Example 51, and earlier in Example 5, many South Korean principals and teachers, including all of my Korean interviewees, travel to Finland to learn about the Finnish education system. However, during the interview with KOR2, they pointed out that even though the reputation of Finnish education is positive and the Korean media is saying that they need to follow in Finland’s footsteps, some people are growing critical of the fact that they cannot simply follow policies that come from a completely different background and social setting without modifying them to fit the existing culture and norms of South Korea. In fact, if education export is done simply like a “crusade”, e.g., the new methods and innovations are simply forced upon the other country without having any knowledge of the specific strengths and

weaknesses of their education system, the excursion is bound to fail. A similar concern was shared by KOR1:

Example 53, KOR1: "The education system is very different between those two countries and I believe **Finnish education system cannot be implanted in Korean context because the success of Finnish education could be achieved only in Finnish context** I think, it is affected by many environmental factors but the trust and high degree of teacher agency and student agency, it's really a totally different context environment in Korea, so **if the Finnish education system is implemented in Korean context, I think they have a strong conflict and also disharmony.**"

Therefore, in order to achieve successful education export collaboration, both Finland and South Korea need to familiarize themselves with what the other country's education system might be in need of, and then consider whether these aspects are easily changeable through education export products or not. For example, as mentioned in Chapter 6.1.1, Korean English teachers consider that they are already familiar with Finnish language teaching methods, and therefore it does not make sense to export any methodology from Finland to South Korea. In fact, the factors that all of the participants believed needed to change, and that have been introduced throughout this study, have involved changing the entire society, which, naturally, is not an easy feat:

Example 54, KOR2: "The society has to be changed, the sociocultural thing is bigger than the educational thing, **we have very good systems actually and we have really good materials and good teachers and [. . .] we have good tools and everything, but the soil is not good enough,** I'm sure that the Finnish education has had a good effect on Korean education."

Example 55, KOR3: "They definitely want to learn something from Finland and I see the value of how we could really improve ourselves, [. . .] but interestingly, South Korean people are not interested in this core value, **we're interested in the result, numbers and the materialistic achievements.**"

What was evident in previous chapters when discussing how English is taught in South Korea, the main problem with education export from Finland to South Korea is that the two countries are so different in terms of what is considered important. Like KOR3 said in Example 55 (see also Example 49), Finnish government is interested in broader themes when improving their own education system, such as the well-being and global growth of the students, but in Korea, the focus is, yet again, on what concrete achievements certain changes could bring, not forgetting monetary gain. The importance is getting good results, no matter what. This, once more, reflects the overall attitudes of each society and this is evident in the educational development objectives as well. Even though, during the interviews with KOR2 and KOR3, they thought that, in general, Korea would not benefit from any Finnish teaching methods before the entire education system has been turned upside down, the Finnish participants did feel like South Korean English teaching could benefit from Finnish ideologies related to teaching and learning. They also thought that Korea might need assistance in implementing the teaching methodology into their English lessons in a more viable way:

Example 56, FIN2: "I think that in Finland, making mistakes is more acceptable, [. . .] we're not like 'Wrong! Shame on you!' [. . .] So I think [*what South Korea could learn from us is that*] they should encourage the students to try to answer. [. . .] **Now it feels like your answer has to be correct on the first try** and that might make the students not want to participate as much in class, if the correct answer was built together, it might encourage them more."

Example 57, FIN1: "I tried to tell them [*the students*] all the time that **it's okay if they make mistakes, the most important thing is that I understand what you are saying, and if I don't, we'll look at what went wrong and you'll learn from it**, but they were like 'but my test'. [. . .] Grades are easy in a way, you give a number or a letter for someone's performance and it's easier to see, what level they are on, but on the other hand, **language is such a complex thing and I feel like it is really hard to [. . .] explain someone's language skills only through a grade**, I think that Koreans, in general, put too much value on grades, they should try to stop doing that and **think of language skills more as life skills, you learn for the sake of your life, not for tests.**"

The topic that FIN1 and FIN2 brought up was that in Korea, the culture around making mistakes should be changed to more acceptable, and instead of shaming students when they do something wrong, the students should be encouraged to use English in an understandable way despite not being perfect. This theme reflects the juxtaposition of the Grammar-Translation Method and the Communicative Approach in real life (see Chapter 2.2). Because the Finnish participants are used to the Communicative Approach, they consider it to be more effective in terms of language learning, and this is also the teaching method they are instructed to use themselves when getting their teacher's degree at university. However, like was described in Chapter 3.2.2, since Koreans are more accustomed to the Grammar-Translation Method and feel like it is the most effective way to learn, the students might feel like different games and activities are not "proper" teaching. This was also evident in Examples 25, 34 and 35.

FIN2 also brought up a broader theme of why language is learned. As was evident in the previous chapters, Koreans' language learning is often mainly motivated by getting good grades at school, and FIN2 pointed out that it would be more fruitful for them to realize that being able to speak a foreign language is also a valuable skill outside of school and that learning should be done with real life in mind, not just test scores.

All of the participants agreed that the culture surrounding exams in South Korea needed to change, but none of them had any concrete ideas on what could actually be done to change it:

Example 58, KOR2: "Actually, **the biggest thing that has to change is the Korean SAT test.** [. . .] Many English teachers are trying to teach in different ways compared to the old days and I myself also try to encourage my students to produce English and it works, if I design my classes in a way that they can express their thoughts in English and I can guide them, so **the assessment structures have to be changed and I think also teachers have to change, too.** [. . .] **Individual teachers I have no power,** there are some movements to affect government policies and they're doing their best and, yeah, it's slowly changing."

Example 59, FIN2: "Their way of testing, I think **it will be very difficult to change.**"

Example 60, FIN1: "English teaching and teaching in general could try to lessen the **importance of exams to a certain degree**, because I think that the students get too stressed because of them. [. . .] The locals are also very critical about the importance of tests and

especially the entrance exams, [. . .] your entire future depends on a single test and this starts already in primary school, you take a test and this determines, which high school you go to, [. . .] I think that is way too early, the kids don't know what they want to do yet."

The fact that both Finnish and Korean participants consider the SAT culture to be harmful and outdated speaks volumes. The competitiveness is even criticized in popular culture, for example, through the *SKY Castle* TV series mentioned in Chapter 3.2.1, and still, practically nothing has changed; The situation is still pretty much identical to that of Jeon's research (2010) little over a decade ago. More and more Koreans agree that even though they want their children to do well in their lives, including high-level academic achievements, they also want their children to not have to go through a similar schooling path that they had in their youth. The seed of change has been planted and now is the time to start making concrete updates on the South Korean education system, whether it is to be done with the help of education export or not.

6.3.2 What Could Finland Learn from South Korea?

Most of the Korean participants were a bit ashamed or taken aback when they were asked to talk about negative things related to their own country, so they were delighted when they got to describe something that South Korea is the best at in terms of English teaching and/or education, and if they thought these things could be molded into South Korea's own education export products.

Example 61, KOR3: "I asked Finnish teachers whether they have this kind of **in-service teacher training program or something and they said no and then a lot of teachers also answer like they need some proper education.** [. . .] That's really beneficial for us actually. [. . .] There has been quite regular in-service teacher training and we learn very specific issues, subject teaching, how to handle the students, how to talk to parents and **we learn a lot of specific things.**"

As KOR3 said, they believe that the Korean in-service teacher training could be a useful addition to the Finnish English teacher education (see Chapter 3.1.3). However, KOR3 also added that the need for in-service training in Korea could stem from the fact that the basic teacher training is lacking in terms of practical training (see also Jeon 2010), "We only learn through books, theories, whatever, but we've never ever learnt what's been happening in the real classrooms." Furthermore, KOR3 thinks in-service training is necessary for teachers in Korea because the officials in the higher levels of the government "don't trust them", which brings up the aspect of hierarchy once again.

In addition to in-service teacher training, some of the participants felt like Finland was in need of a way to take more advanced students into account as well:

Example 62, KOR3: "There's no programme for excellent students. [. . .] They need more and Korea is crazy about creating the programme of excellency and private education also has been handling these excellent students, so it has been beneficial. [. . .] **I always appreciate the sense of equity [in Finland], but in everything there is always good and bad sides, so this could be the bad side.**"

Example 63, FIN2: "I've heard that some people criticize Finland, because we help the less skilled students and not the ones, who shine, but **I think that is changing and we're trying to offer special education to those 'gifted' students as well.**"

KOR3 also described a situation, where their Korean friend, whose child is brought up in Finland, mistook the Finnish lack of a program for excellent students as a racist act towards their child; Since the child excelled in school but the teachers did not acknowledge her by offering her a way to get ahead of others, the parent believed that their child was falling behind or that the child was discriminated towards at school, when in reality, they simply did not know that Finnish schools do not offer that kind of treatment to any gifted students. However, FIN2 pointed out in Example 63 that this is changing and special education is currently offered to more proficient students, for example, in the form of upward differentiation in order to offer them tasks that are challenging enough to avoid them acting out due to boredom or frustration over tasks that are too easy for them.

FIN1 and KOR1 believed that Finnish teachers should spend more time with their students and they should also work closer with the students' parents to make sure that the full potential of their children is reached and that they are constantly evolving to the best of their abilities:

Example 64, KOR1: "We have a kind of commitment to students, we spend a lot of time and in a lot of energy, even after school. [. . .] Homeroom teachers, they see their students every day and every morning and they have some time to talk with them and council with them, so they share a lot of things with them and that's why they have a very strong influence in their student life, in that kind of age, students [. . .] listen to teachers more than their parents. [. . .] **It has like pros and cons I think, pros its really good like educational influence but cons is it's to tiring, teachers don't have their life.**"

Example 65, FIN1: "The hagwon, where I worked at, was very good at monitoring the students' progress, [. . .] **they can see, how much each student has developed in English and other subjects each month.** [. . .] The Korean teachers were very diligent when it came to calling the parents once every month and talk about things and **really follow the progress that the students are making.**"

Both Finnish and Korean participants agreed that the Korean teachers did put a lot of time and effort into making sure that their students education was advancing smoothly. However, as FIN2 described earlier in Example 18, from their own point of view, the Korean teachers seemed distant and not very close with their students due to the hierarchical differences of the two cultures and that their interests were mostly academic and not related to how the students were doing in their lives outside of school. FIN2 also thought that Finnish teachers had a closer relationship with their students especially due to the fact that their aim was to make sure that the students were doing well in all aspects of their lives and not only academically. Maybe, in the case of developing teacher training, both countries could learn something from each other.

FIN2 thought that the way Korean language classes are structured can have its advantages and could also be beneficial in Finland:

Example 66, FIN2: “I don’t think it’s necessarily a bad thing **that the structure of the lessons is clear and students know what to expect**, because in Finland, teachers sort of look for the surprise-factor, but for certain students, **it might be good to not focus so much on how active they are during class**, because in Finland, that can have a big effect, so this way also those, who are not very vocal during the lessons, **can shine in the test results.**”

Since people have different personalities and learn in different ways, it is important to facilitate all of these ways into teaching as well. In Finnish foreign language classes, the out-going and actively participating students are appreciated and get good grades, whereas in Korea, the more silent, diligent students succeed well tests and are at the top of the class. This, once more, reflects the aspects of language that are valued in each country; productive language skills versus passive language skills. FIN2 also mentioned that they have noticed that Finnish students sometimes long for more “passive” (in their part) language classes instead of always having to create something, be constantly active and work on different projects. Sometimes they just want to sit and listen to the teacher talk. Possibly a mixture of the Grammar-Translation Method and the Communicative Approach would, indeed, be the best way of teaching English, since they would facilitate different learners and each could shine in their own way.

As could be seen in Chapters 6.3.1 and 6.3.2, education export collaboration between Finland and South Korea is not as simple as one might think. The two countries differ so much in terms of culture and education systems that only changing a small part of English teaching, like introducing a certain teaching method, is nowhere near enough to improve the English skills of the entire country. Besides, there is no magical teaching method that is the secret behind Finnish peoples’ English skills, much like there is not a single “bad” method that would explain why South Koreans’ English skills are, according to EPI, moderate. Teaching is so much more than what happens in the classroom, and in order to make permanent changes in language skills, the surrounding society should support this goal and change accordingly, which was also named by Sahlberg as an important factor when creating an environment for teachers, where they are supported and do not have to try to work according to a model that does not meet the requirements of the classrooms of today (see Chapter 4, Sahlberg 2015).

7 DISCUSSION & CONCLUSION

By interviewing English teachers, the aim of this thesis was to find out what similarities and differences in Finnish and South Korean English teaching methods, as well as the reasons behind the noticeable differences in the results of the *English Proficiency Index* in these two countries described in Chapter 1. Furthermore, the aim was also to find out whether the teachers felt like Finland and Korea could collaborate in the field of education export in the future to improve the English teaching of both countries. The answers were gathered by interviewing three South Korean and two Finnish English teachers, who had an academic grasp of how English is taught in both countries. Interviewing the teachers was important, since they have first-hand experience of what happens in the classrooms of Finland and South Korea, and what educational developments would actually be beneficial for the students and the teachers themselves. As was evident in Chapter 6 of this thesis, the objectives mentioned in the curriculum or the governmental policies might not represent the current situation of what teaching is actually like and how the policies are implemented. Giving a voice to the teachers would also be extremely important in education export cooperation and educational development in general to avoid developments that feels mismatched to what is actually needed on the classroom level.

The aim of my first research question, “(1) How do Finnish and South Korean English teachers describe the Finnish and the South Korean ways of teaching English? How do they differ from each other?”, was to find out what Finnish and South Korean English teachers consider to be similar and different in the teaching methods used in the two countries. As was evident in the results, this turned out to not be an easy question to answer. The Korean participants thought that the English teaching methods used in Finnish language classrooms were not that different from the Korean ones. However, the Finnish participants pointed out that the Korean teaching methods, such as the excessive use of repetition in class, were still heavily reflective of the Grammar-Translation Method (see Chapter 2.2), which was also evident in the description of the South Korean education system in Chapters 3.2.1 and 3.2.2. On the other hand, the Finnish methods were often inspired by the Communicative Approach (see Chapters 3.1.1 and 3.1.2). The Korean participants argued that Korean

teachers were aware of communicative teaching methods, but were not able to use them in class as much when compared to English lessons in Finland, partly due to restrictions in terms of what they were able to teach and partly because communicative methods were not considered as effective by both teachers and language students in the East-Asian education culture, as was also described in Chapter 3.2.2 (Chang 2011). Furthermore, because of the current evaluation system in South Korea, the Korean participants did not feel like the system was ready to start evaluating productive skills since they felt like it would be difficult to be fair and objective when assessing. Introducing formative assessment into the mix (see Chapter 3.1.1) could make it easier to start including more productive tasks and exercises in English classes in South Korea.

Both Finnish and Korean participants agreed that in terms of the curriculum, Finnish teachers had more freedom to implement it as they saw fit and South Korean teachers' work was more controlled in many ways, which also reflected on the evaluation of Korean teachers (see Chapter 3.2.3; e.g., OECD 2016). However, the curriculum itself was not the main reason for these constraints and, instead, the Korean English lessons were strongly dictated by the SATs and other high- and low-stakes tests, which are socioculturally very important, as was also mentioned in Chapters 3.2.1 and 3.2.2 (e.g., Jones 2013; Hwang 2003; see also Jeon 2010). Furthermore, since only listening and writing are tested in the SATs, therefore, these aspects of the language are the main focus during English lessons in Korea, whereas in Finland, the focus is more on learning to communicate and use the language in the real world. This difference does not reflect the views of the Korean curriculum, however, since learning to communicate was highlighted as the main goal of English teaching in both Finland and Korea in Chapters 3.1.2 and 3.2.2 (e.g., Ministry of Education 2008; Finnish National Board of Education 2014). Once again, the theoretical aspects and goals cannot be implemented in the classrooms due to the competitive nature of the Korean education system (see also Jeon 2010).

The hierarchical setting in the classrooms in Finland and South Korea was seen as very different by all of the participants, and this was also a theme where the Finnish and the Korean participants' views on what they preferred contradicted each other the most. All of the participants felt like Finnish classrooms were more free and the students could, if they so wished, influence what was done during the lessons. The Finnish participants saw the Korean hierarchical setting as very strict and that the teachers felt more distant from their students when compared to Finland. The Korean participants thought that the Korean teachers spent a lot of time with their students and thought that this could be something that should be adopted in Finland as well. On the other hand, the Finnish participants valued quality over quantity in teacher-student relationships and thought that the Korean way was a bit excessive, but did think that Finland could benefit from a more respect-based classroom etiquette like in Korea.

An important factor between the two countries' education systems and English teaching was the difference in free and for-profit schooling. For-profit afternoon

schools, hagwons, are extremely popular in Korea and their purpose is to ensure that the students learn topics in advance so that they can receive good grades once these topics are introduced in public schools, as was explained in Chapter 3.2.1 (e.g., Jones 2013; Panahi 2019; Jeon 2010). Hagwons are also mostly responsible for teaching the students productive English skills, which are often not included in the lessons in public schools. The importance and the rationality of hagwons was questioned by the Finnish participants and their existence and necessity was also considered somewhat unfortunate by the Korean participants, but due to the current state of society, they are a piece of the puzzle that is not likely to change anytime soon.

The aim of my second research question, “(2) What do the teachers see as possible reasons behind the differences in Finnish and South Korean English proficiency test results?”, was to pinpoint concrete reasons behind the different English Proficiency Index test results in Finland and South Korea. Similarly to Question 1, the reasons were not found only on the classroom level and could not solely be traced back to different teaching methods. In terms of previous research done by Jeon (2010), similar themes, e.g., the practices at school not meeting the educational objectives of the government, and the learning objectives and what is actually tested being different from each other were evident in my data as well, thus indicating that, unfortunately, not a lot of progress has been made in developing this particular aspect of the South Korean education system in the last decade or so.

It was noteworthy that in South Korea, English was often only seen as an academic subject and a gateway to a better future, and the non-academic reasons for learning the language were not important (see Chapters 3.2.1 and 3.2.2), whereas in Finland, most students wanted to learn languages in order to use them in the real world while, e.g., travelling or working abroad. The participants felt that, in general, Finnish students were also more often interested in the culture of English-speaking countries, an interest which, according to both the results of this study and Chapter 3.2.1, has recently been increasing with Korean students as well. In Finland, it is easy to find English everywhere, even outside of the classroom (as mentioned in Chapter 3.2.1, Jaatinen & Saarivirta 2014), whereas in Korea, the students mostly hear English at school and only Korean in their everyday lives, which makes it difficult to make progress in their language skills without significant effort.

The importance of exams and the fact that mostly only passive language skills are tested in South Korea had, from the perspective of the participants, a destructive effect on the Korean students’ language learning. Only evaluating certain aspects of a student’s foreign language skills can affect their learning motivation negatively. It was also noteworthy that foreign languages were taught differently to South Koreans and to foreign students in Korea; the foreigners were taught in more Westernized and Communicative ways, whereas the Korean students were taught according to the Grammar-Translation Method. The reason for this could be that they are taking advantage of what the student is previously familiar with, and try to cater for the students’ supposed language learning needs. As has been stated multiple times in this thesis, the importance of getting a good education is vital for Korean students and

hence, the teaching reflects what they need to be able to do in order to achieve this, e.g., learning passive language skills (see also Jeon 2010). For foreign students learning, for example, Korean in Korea, the most important aspect of a language is learning to communicate, which is why this is the focus of the lessons (see washback effect explained in Chapter 3.2.2).

An important factor that also appears to affect the English skills of South Koreans was the fact that Korean teachers did not feel confident enough in their own skills to be able to teach productive language skills, a result which was also evident in Jeon's research (2010). Furthermore, even though the *English Proficiency Index* test measured only listening and writing skills, which are also the skills that South Korean schooling focuses on, the Korean students are so accustomed to learning everything by heart before the test that they are not used to applying their knowledge in a previously unfamiliar context. Since the EPI test does not have any specific materials for the Korean students to cram before the test, they have not been able to prepare for it in the way that they are used to. Since Finnish students learn to apply and use their language skills in many different scenarios at school, they also manage to do better in the EPI test. Therefore, the mediocre ranking of South Korean people's English skills in the EPI test is not necessarily a direct representation of their English skills, but rather what kinds of tests they are used to at school. Granted, the test does give an idea on each country's English level, but those who have succeeded well in the EPI test probably have a similar education system as the test creators, thus giving these countries an advantage since they are previously familiar with taking similar types of tests and know how to succeed well in them (see also Jeon 2010).

The aim of my final research question, "(3) In the teachers' view, are there any Finnish English teaching methods that could benefit South Korean English teaching, and vice versa?", was to map out some possibilities for collaboration in education export between the two countries in order to further develop both of their English teaching. The participants from both countries came up with many possible themes and topics which could be improved, both in their own country as well as the other country in question. However, a clear division was noticeable in what types of ideas for improvement the teachers from each country had in mind; the South Korean participants' ideas were mostly related to the classroom or the school level and concrete learning results, whereas Finnish participants' ideas were more broad and focused on the education system as a whole, as well as the wellbeing of the students and, thus, the entire society.

Finnish education has a positive reputation in Korea, but since the education systems and societies of the two countries are so different, the participants felt like it would not be possible to just try to implement changes in the system without being aware of the differences and the other things that affect education. As could be seen multiple times in the analysis section of this thesis, most of the aspects that needed changing in the South Korean English teaching were not so easily "fixed", since most of them were so deeply rooted in the entire societal structure of the country that

changing them would require years of thorough educational reform and a shift in the attitudes of the entire society.

Most of the changes the participants suggested for both countries were clearly motivated by their own beliefs of what they think is useful in language teaching, which, consequently, also often went hand in hand with the objectives of their home country's curriculum. All of the participants agreed that the South Korean culture surrounding exams and academic competition should be changed, but none of them had any concrete suggestions on how this could be achieved. The Finnish participants suggested starting with small changes, such as being more accepting of mistakes and errors in class, which could create a more encouraging language learning environment. The Finnish participants also felt like the motivation behind why Koreans learn English should be done with real life possibilities in mind, not just academic success, which reflects the Finnish curriculum's goals (see Chapter 3.1.2; Finnish National Board of Education 2014). In terms of what Finland could learn from South Korea, KOR3 suggested that the Korean teachers' in-service training could be implemented to Finnish teacher education as well. Another necessary addition, according to FIN2 and KOR3, was special education possibilities for more proficient students. FIN2 also thought that Finland, and especially students with special needs, could benefit from a more predictable lesson structure which is used in Korea. In order for education export collaboration to be successful, both participants need to be familiar with each other's education systems and societies in order to try and determine aspects that could benefit each country in the best possible way.

As was briefly mentioned in Chapter 1 of this thesis, the Finnish EPI results declined from 3rd place in 2020 to 9th place in 2021. This change was not addressed in this thesis, as the focus was on other aspects. The speculation in the introduction that distance learning could be one of the possible causes of this decline was not based on any previous research. However, based on the results of this thesis, the different teaching methods used in the two countries could be the reason for why Korea's results stayed similar and Finland's declined: Since South Korean language teaching is mostly done through the Grammar-Translation Method and Finland favours the Communicative Approach, when schools were forced to implement distance learning on short notice without much assistance, distance learning is bound to be easier through the Grammar-Translation Method, since lectures conducted online do not differ from in-person lectures that much, learning can be done independently and the South Korean students are already used to studying on their own. The Communicative Approach, however, does not work as well in a distance learning setting and, moreover, since most Finnish students are used to learning languages in a social and Task-Based setting, it is more difficult for them to study independently or through online lectures. Therefore, in this case, South Korean students and their learning results can be assumed not to suffer as much from distance learning since the change was not that radical when compared to how teaching was done in the classroom.

Because the English teaching methods of Finland and South Korea had not been previously compared to each other (other than on a textbook-related level, see Namgung 2016), the comparative results of this study are not comparable to the results of any previous studies. However, as was evident through Chapter 6, Jeon's previous research (2010) on reasons behind the English skills of South Koreans' was complementary to some of the results of this thesis as well. In terms of education export, there are no previous studies of collaboration between Finland and South Korea, but HEI Schools has many establishments in Korea, where the Finnish teaching methods are used, and South Koreans view Finnish education in a positive light (see Chapter 4, e.g., HEI Schools 2019). There has been no previous reports of South Korean education export collaboration to Finland. However, imaginative collaboration possibilities and challenges should be researched and taken into account in order to open doors for future collaboration possibilities in the field of education. After all, education export is first and foremost a collaboration project between two or more countries and, thus, the angle of research included in this thesis is very important and fruitful in terms of the future. Moreover, teachers should be included in the development process to ensure that the new updates, in fact, meet the needs of students and teachers in the field.

Education export should be researched further in order to improve the education systems of every country around the world. There is not only one education system that towers above every other, and even the most advanced and praised education systems benefit from looking outside the box and opening their eyes to improvement possibilities by finding out how things are done in other countries. Even though these interviews turned out to be a successful way of finding answers to my research questions, my original plan, in addition to interviewing English teachers from both Finland and South Korea, was to travel to South Korea myself to do classroom observations at different levels of education to have a concrete sampling of, for example, what teaching methods the teachers use, how the hierarchical setting or the curriculum affect learning, and how hagwons affect the learning process. This plan was foiled due to COVID-19, but this would be an interesting topic for a future study.

In the case of South Korea, a longitudinal study could be conducted to compare the learning results of a traditional South Korean language classroom to those that have incorporated some Western learning methods into their teaching. In order to this type of study to be successful, the participants should only take part in English lessons in this context and not participate in hagwon teaching throughout the study. Furthermore, it might be most fruitful to do these tests on young students who are at the start of their academic career and not yet used to the current way of teaching English in Korea. However, it would also be interesting to see the differences in older students' learning results by using different types of teaching methods and if the teaching methods they are previously used to have an effect on the learning results.

Furthermore, it would be interesting to do a wider, cross-disciplinary study, where the way languages are taught would be compared to the way a traditionally more academic subject, such as mathematics, is taught. This type of a study would

allow further understanding on how different subjects are learned and taught, and possibly shed light on why certain countries have a good track record in PISA tests, but not in English proficiency comparisons. In terms of distance learning during the COVID-19 pandemic, it would be interesting to see if other countries show any changes in their English Proficiency Index test results and if these countries have anything in common in terms of their language teaching methods. This type of a study could help to improve distance learning methods, which seem to be here to stay in terms of teaching languages as well.

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APPENDIX 1

FIN1 and FIN2's comments in their original language, Finnish:

Example 3, FIN1: "Kyllä siinä oli mun mielestä loppujen lopuksi **aika paljon samaa**, en tiedä onko se sitten sitä kun mä oon vähän vanhempaa ikäluokkaa nii en tiää tosta nykytilanteesta niin paljon."

Example 6, FIN1: "**Toisto**, sitä ne tekee tosi paljon, ne yritti saada meidät kaikki natiivit englanninopettajat kanssa tekemään sitä, mehän ollaan silleen, että **halutaan silleen luontevaa keskustelua**."

Example 8, FIN1: "Ne ulkomaalaiset opettajat [*hagwonissa*] oli aika monesta eri maasta ja musta tuntuu, että meillä kaikilla oli silleen vähän sama länsimaalainen tyyli. [. . .] Musta tuntuu, että aika monet niistä oppilaista oli vaan silleen että 'OK, **korealaisen opettajan tyyli - ei-korealaisen opettajan tyyli**'."

Example 9, FIN1: "Musta tuntuu, että korealaiset laittaa liikaa painoarvoa niille arvosanoille, ne on hirveän huolissaan niitten koetuloksista ja sitten **kun me harjoitellaan niin me harjoitellaan kokeita varten**. [. . .] Minusta tuntuu, että Suomessa **kun harjoitellaan niin harjoitellaan oikeata elämää varten**, se ei ole niinkään koetta varten, se on aika iso ja tärkeä ero mun mielestä."

Example 13, FIN1: "Ne oli ala-asteikäisiä, mutta ne kirjat ja ne aihealueet oli selvästi **teineille tarkoitettuja**. [. . .] Sellaisia 'mitä sinä haluat tehdä myöhemmin elämässä' ja 'mitä sä mietit yliopiston pääsykokeesta', mutta ei ne viidennellä luokalla vielä tuollaisia ajattele. [. . .] Mä aloitin vähän ennen kahtatoista ne mun eskarin tunnit ja mun vikat tunnit vitos- ja kutosluokkalaisten kanssa oli puoli 9 saakka illalla, **ne opiskelee jo siinä ykstoist vuotiaana tosi pitkälle iltaan ja sehän vaan pahenee lukioon mennessä**. [. . .] Mä en tykkää yhtään siitä, että ne tekee niin pitkää päivää siellä."

Example 14, FIN2: "Minun mielestä se on **vähän turhaa ja liian kuormittavaa varsinkin nuorille lapsille, oppia voi niin monella muullakin tavalla**, esimerkiksi se, jos niillä olis vaikka kerhoja, että tehdään hauskan kautta, niin se olis paljon kivempaa ja sieltä ei tulis läksyjä."

Example 18, FIN2: "Siellä on semmonen selkeä tunnelma, että **opettaja on eri tasolla tottakai**, ja sitten se, että opettajaa ei niinku vaivata turhilla asioilla ja se on vaan se hierarkia. [. . .] Suomessa minusta se [*opettaja-oppilas-suhde*] **on semmonen leikkisä, että se ei oo niin vakavaa**."

Example 19, FIN1: "Ulkomaalaiset opettajat oli selvästi enemmän niinku kavereita ja korealaiset opettajat oli sitten opettaja. [. . .] Aina kun se korealainen opettaja tuli niin ne melkein vähän pelkäsi sitä koska ne tiesi että ne opettajat sitten puhuu niitten vanhemmille ja että kotona saattaa tulla satikutia."

Example 20, FIN2: "Opettaja enemmän minun mielestä Suomessa palvelee oppilaita, kun taas sitten Koreassa on vähän sillei että oppilaat menee kuuntelemaan opettajaa. [. . .] En sano etteikö Suomessa arvostettaisi opettajaa, **mut se vois olla kuka tahansa opettaja siellä luokassa.**"

Example 21, FIN1: "Meillä oli jokainen tunti silleen, että **meidän piti tehdä jotain 3 tai 4 sivua siitä kirjasta sen 45 minuutin aikana** ja jos sinä et päässyt kaikkia läpi sillä kertaa niin sitten sinulla ei hirveästi ollut aikaa tehdä niitä ylimääräisiä sivuja seuraavalla kerralla, ja kun **niillä joka ikinen kuukausi oli koe siitä Unitista.**"

Example 27, FIN1: "Musta tuntuu, että **korealaiset on tosi tunnollisia opiskelemaan** että se on vähän niinku Suomi että **ne oikeasti välittää koulutuksesta, ne on tosi ylpeitä siitä omasta koulutuksestaan.** [. . .] Sen kyllä huomasi, että ne on tosi kilttejä ja tekee niin niinku opettaja sanoo ja sitten kun itse miettii kun mun äiti oli yläasteen opettaja [*Suomessa*], joitakin asioita mitä se on kertonut sen opettajavuosilta niin **vähän eri maailmoissa eletään.**"

Example 28, FIN1: "Korealaisilla musta tuntuu, että kaikki mitä ne opiskelee, ihan sama oliko se kieli vai matikka vai pianonsoitto vai mitä nyt onkaan, niin **niillä on se tietty tapa opiskella ja musta tuntuu että se on kulttuuriin sidonnainen tapa, että pitää vaan harjoitella kunnes oppii kaiken ulkoa**, kielessähän toi ulkoa oppiminen ei aina auta että **sun pitää osata niinku ajatella siinä samalla kun sä puhut.**"

Example 30, FIN2: "Opettaja sanoo ja oppilas opettelee sen ulkoa ja kokeessakin, tai ryhmätehtävissä, [. . .] ei ollu sillä lailla et siinä tavallaan pitäis oikeesti aatella ite, tai piti niinku soveltaa sitä, mut **siinä ei saanu ajatella erilaila kun se opettaja**, siihen oli kauhea semmonen pelko, että ei, me saahaan huono numero jos sanoo, et meidän mielestä tää vois olla vähän erilaila."

Example 32, FIN2: "Eihän siinä kannata harjotella puhetta, jos sitä ei testata. [. . .] Suurin osa opettajista varmaan haluaa palvella sitä tarkotusta mihin ne opiskelee sitä niin se puhe jää vähemmälle."

Example 33, FIN1: "Mä luin niiden esseitä, että niinku **mä kirjoitin tolleen suomeksi ehkä kolmos- tai nelosluokalla ja ne vetelee tuollaisia esseitä niitten tokalla kielellä englanniksi.** [. . .] Ja mä ymmärrän, että osan niistä asioista tietenkin niitten vanhemmat auttaa kotona, mutta nuo esseet on sellaisia että ne kirjoitta ne siellä koulussa, että ne ei tee niitä kotona, niin mä oon siinä silleen et 'mitää?'"

Example 36, FIN2: "Molemmat tiedostaa sen, että **kielioppi on tärkeää** ja sitten, että **kieli on kommunikaatiota**, tietenki ne tiedostaa sen eri tavoilla."

Example 39, FIN2: "Se kielen arvo ei välttämättä tullu siitä et mullon kauhee sisäinen palo tätä kieltä kohtaan vaan se oli enemmänki sitä, että nykyään jotta saat töitä, sun täytyy yleensä osata englantia ja sitten englantia senkin takia, että sie voit muuttaa joskus ulkomaille, et tavallaan **se kieli oli enemmänki työkaluna arvostettu.**"

Example 41, FIN1: "Koreassa kaikki tv on koreaksi ja sitten ne kuuntelee korealaisista musiikkia ja niin edelleen niin niitten se kaikki englanti tulee siitä tunneilta. [. . .] Musta tuntuu, että korealaisten on aika vaikea löytää englannin kieltä ihan noin vaan ympäristöstä, että se pitää erikseen löytää."

Example 44, FIN2: "Siellä suurin osa tuli ihan vaan juttelemaan, että siihen tulis mukavuutta ja se ei olis niin pelottavaa, ja sitten osalla oli sillei, että niillä oli vaikka joku haastattelu tulossa englanniksi niin sitten ne halus, et mie kysyin niiltä niitä kysymyksiä mitä ne oli mulle valmistellu."

Example 48, FIN1: "Siinä annettiin ehdotuksia, että miten saada kiinalaiset oppimaan esimerkiksi äänteitä ja sitten siinä oli paljon esimerkkejä erilaisista peleistä mitä pystyy luokassa pelata ja se meni myös aika tekniseksi. [. . .] **Mutta sitten tietenkin kun itse alkaa opettaa ja tulee ihan hirveä kiire, että vaan pääsee ne sivut läpi niin ei siinä tule paljon tehtyä niitä.** [. . .] Kyllä ne siellä niinku yritti sitä *[toiminnallisuutta]* tosi paljon, kun luki sitä niin ajatteli että tämänhän kuulostaa tosi hyvältä ja **sitten pääsi itse kouluun ja katto että miten ne opettaa englantia, niin tässä ei nyt ihan kirjoitus ja oikea elämä oikeen kohtaa.**"

Example 52, FIN1: "Koulutus oli kyllä tosi iso osa, että se on yksi niitä asioita mistä **Suomi on tunnettu Koreassa**, että niinku ksylytoli, joulupukki ja koulutus taitaa olla ne asiat mistä me ollaan tunnettuja, että jos rupeen kauppaa suomalaista koulutusta siellä niin ihan vaan se Suomi plus koulutus yhdessä antaa ihmisille jo tosi positiivisen mielikuvan, ne tietää heti että mistä puhutaan."

Example 56, FIN2: "Minusta Suomessa virheet on hyväksyttävämpiä, [. . .] meillä ei sanota sillei 'Väärin! Häpeä!' [. . .] Niin minusta *[Koreassa voisi lisätä]* ainakin sitä, että kannustettaisi siihen, että yrittää vastata. [. . .] **Nyt siinä on semmonen tunnelma, että sen pitäis olla oikein heti ekalla kerralla**, et ehkä se vähentää sitä osallistumista, et sitten, jos yhdessä rakennetaan se oikea vastaus voisi kannustaakin enemmän."

Example 57, FIN1: "Mä yritin koko ajan sanoa niille *[oppilaille]*, että ei haittaa vaikka sä teet vähän virheitä, **pääasia on että mä ymmärrän mitä sä sanot ja jos en ymmärrä, niin katsotaan mikä meni väärin ja sinä opit siitä**, mutta ne on silleen 'mut mun koe'. [. . .] Arvosanat on silleen helppoja, että jos sä annat jonkun numeron tai kirjaimen jonkun suoritukselle niin se on paljon helpompi arvioida tai katsoa että millä tasolla

on, mutta toisaalta **kieli on niin monimutkainen asia että musta tuntuu että siitä on tosi vaikea** [. . .] **selittää kielitaitoa ihan vaan pelkän numeron avulla**, mun mielestä korealaiset yleisestikin kaikessa opetuksessa mieltii vähän liikaa niitä numeroita ja arvosanoja, pitäisi päästä siitä pois ja enemmänkin ajatella että **kielitaito on elämäntaito, että se on sun elämää varten, ei sun kokeita varten.**”

Example 59, FIN2: ”Just se testaaminen, minusta tuntuu, **että siitä vois olla tosi vaikea päästä pois.**”

Example 60, FIN1: ”**Enkun opetus ja yleisestikin opetus voisi yrittää ottaa sitä koe-painosuutta pois jonkin verran**, koska minun mielestä ne oppilaat stressaa ihan turhaan sitä. [. . .] Ne ihan paikallisetkin kritisoi tosi paljon sitä koekeskeisyyttä ja varsinkin niitä pääsykokeita, [. . .] että sun koko tulevaisuus riippuu siitä yhdestä kokeesta ja siellähän on, että jo ala-asteella sä teet jonkun kokeen ja sitten sen perusteella katsotaan mille yläasteelle sä meet, [. . .] mun mielestä se on ihan hirveä aikaisen, eihän ne lapset tiedä mitä ne haluaa tehdä.”

Example 63, FIN2: ”Mie oon kuullu että jotkut kritisoi Suomea siitä, et meillä yritetään auttaa niitä putoajia, eikä niitä, jotka loistaa, **minusta siihenkin on tulossa nyt muutosta, et yritetään, et erityisopetusta saa myös ne ‘lahjakkaat’.**”

Example 65, FIN1: ”Se hagwon missä mä olin töissä niin se oli tosi hyvä siinä seuraamisessa, että kun siellä [. . .] **pysty katsomaan että kuinka paljon ne oli päässy kuu-kausittain etenemään siinä englanninkielen oppimisessa ja muutenkin.** [. . .] Ne Korean opettajat oli tosi tarkkoja siitä että niitten piti soittaa niille vanhemmille kotiin kerran kuussa vähintään ja puhua asioista ja niinku **oikeasti seurasi niitä oppilaita ja niitten kehitystä.**”

Example 66, FIN2: ”Minusta se ei ole välttämättä huono asia, että **se on niin selkeä se tunnin rakenne, että sä tiiät mitä odottaa**, koska tavallaan Suomessa ehkä haetaan sitä yllättävyyttä, mut sitten toisaalta tietynlaisille oppilaille se voi olla tosi hyvä ja sitten **se ei myöskään nojaa niin paljon siihen kuinka aktiivinen olet**, koska meillä Suomessa se saattaa joskus vaikuttaa aika paljon, niin sitten nekin, jotka ei välttämättä luokassa sais ääntä kuuluviin, **voi loistaa tosi hyvin sitten niissä tuloksissa.**”