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‘If don’t understand, then I send a message on Wilma.’ : Navigating home-school cooperation in a second language.

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'If don't understand, then I send a message on Wilma.' : Navigating home-school cooperation in a second language (Pinja Savaloja)

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Home-school cooperation is a well-researched topic internationally. Previous research indicates that home-school cooperation has a positive impact on students' academic performance and school dropout rates. In Finland the research has not been as plentiful and has often focused on the cooperation occurring between Finnish speaking teachers and guardians.

The purpose of this study is to examine and analyse what practices are employed in home-school cooperation between Finnish speaking teachers and non-Finnish speaking guardians. In addition, this research aims to showcase the different and unique experiences of home-school cooperation experienced by teachers and guardians, and how those experiences impact the perceptions of participants.

The theoretical framework of this thesis focuses on the dimensions of home-school cooperation as presented by Joyce Epstein (1995) and the different factors impacting professional cooperation. In addition, the thesis offers an overview of the current Finnish laws and regulations guiding home-school cooperation practices in schools. The research employed van Manen's view of hermeneutic phenomenology and accordingly collected interview data from the participants, which was then analysed with the help of thematic content analysis.

The findings indicate that the experiences of home-school cooperation are highly individual, with different school and teachers employing varying practices. Online platforms, such as Wilma, and the use of English instead of Finnish were the most common communication methods across the participants. Although participants generally reported high satisfaction towards home-school cooperation and the importance of it, the experiences varied based on the state of interpersonal relationship between a teacher and a guardian.

Keywords: Home-school cooperation, parental involvement, parent-teacher conference, communication

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Kodin ja koulun yhteistyö on maailmalla yleisesti tutkittu ilmiö. Aikaisemmat tutkimukset osoittavat yhteistyöllä olevan positiivinen vaikutus oppilaiden oppimistuloksiin sekä koulupudokkuuden ennaltaehkäisyyn. Suomessa ilmiötä ei ole tutkittu yhtä runsaasti, ja tehdyt tutkimukset ovat usein keskittyneet suomea puhuvien opettajien ja huoltajien kokemuksiin.

Tämän tutkimuksen tarkoituksena on tutkia ja analysoida, kuinka kodin ja koulun yhteistyö järjestetään suomea puhuvien opettajien ja muuta kieltä puhuvien huoltajien välillä. Lisäksi tutkimus pyrkii tuomaan esille opettajien ja huoltajien erilaisia ja yksilöllisiä kokemuksia sekä tutkimaan, kuinka eri kokemukset vaikuttavat osallistujien näkemyksiin kodin ja koulun yhteistyöstä.

Teoreettinen viitekehys tarkastelee kodin ja koulun yhteistyön eri ulottuvuuksia Joyce Epsteinin (1995) mallin avulla sekä sitä, mitkä eri tekijät vaikuttavat ammatilliseen yhteistyöhön. Lisäksi tutkimus tarjoaa katsauksen Suomen nykyisiin lakeihin ja säädöksiin, jotka ohjaavat kodin ja koulun yhteistyön toteuttamista kouluissa. Tutkimus hyödynsi van Manenin tulkintaa hermeneuttisesta fenomenologiasta, ja näkemykselle tyypilliseen tapaan aineisto kerättiin haastatteluiden avulla, jotka myöhemmin analysoitiin temaattisen analyysin avulla.

Tutkimus osoittaa kokemusten kodin ja koulun yhteistyöstä olevan hyvin yksilöllisiä eri koulujen ja opettajien käyttäessä vaihtelevia yhteistyömenetelmiä. Verkossa toimivat kommunikaatioalustat, kuten Wilma, sekä englannin kielen käyttö suomen sijaan olivat yleisimmät kommunikaatiomenetelmät osallistujien välillä. Vaikka osallistajat raportoivat yleisesti olevansa tyytyväisiä kodin ja koulun yhteistyötä ja sen tärkeyttä kohtaan, kokemukset vaihtelivat opettajan ja huoltajan välisen vuorovaikutussuhteen mukaan.

Avainsanat: Kodin ja koulun yhteistyö, vanhempien osallisuus, vanhempainilta, kommunikaatio

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1. Introduction

Home-school cooperation is a well-researched topic both in Finland and internationally. However, less attention has been given to the home-school cooperation when the participants lack a common language to communicate with. In Finland, the number of families with one or both parents having a language other than Finnish as their first language (L1) had almost doubled in ten years. In 2010 there were 38 000 families where one or both parents had a language other than Finnish as their L1, in 2018 that number had risen to over 70 000 families (Tilastokeskus, 2020).

As I began my research for a thesis topic, a news article gained national attention and became a topic of great debate among the public. The article (Okko, 2023) reported that a Finnish lower-secondary school, teaching students between the ages of 13 and 16, had refused to communicate with parents in English. In the article, the parents reported that they had contacted the principal of the school in the beginning of the school year, regarding their preferred communication language. Based on that conversation they had come to understand that communication related to their child would be handled in English. However, as the school began, the communication from the school happened in Finnish, a language that neither of the parents was fluent in. The parents repeatedly asked for clarifications in English, until the school communicated to them that the teachers are not required to answer messages in English as the schools' official working languages are Finnish and Swedish (Okko, 2023).

The topic is thus very timely and carries a great importance to the Finnish education system as well. I also wrote my bachelor's thesis (Savaloja, 2021) on the importance of home language in schools, and this thesis hopes to carry on the research about the significance of language in societies, albeit from a slightly different point of view. This thesis aims to understand the experiences of both the teachers and the guardians in home-school cooperations when they do not have a shared language. The focus on this thesis is placed especially on the communication practices between school and home and not so much on the other forms of home-school cooperation. In order to gain a deeper understanding of this complex topic, I have employed the use of phenomenological interviews as a data collection method. The guiding research questions of this thesis are:

1. *How is the home-school cooperation organised when the guardians do not speak Finnish fluently?*

-What practices have worked?

-What practices have not worked?

2. *How do the guardians and teachers experience the cooperation?*

With the first question, I hope to gain practical knowledge of what practices are usually employed in the home-school cooperation. In this thesis the focus is placed on the experiences of both the guardians and the teachers as they both have integral parts in students' educational journeys. Family involvement has been shown to improve students' academic performance and behaviour in schools (Zaidi et al., 2021). Teachers on the other hand facilitate the learning and social situations in schools as well as enable or inhibit the engagement of parents to their children's education (Rickert & Skinner, 2022). With this question, the importance of seeking out both the teachers and the guardians' experiences is significance since a practice that may be useful to one side may limit the participation of the other side. When gaining understanding from all participants involved in the home-school cooperation, it may be possible to identify usable communication policies that could act as a foundation for other teachers and guardians who find themselves in this situation.

The second question aims to include the possible emotional aspect of home-school cooperation into this research. Language is an important part of one's identity and has in the past often been used as a method of exclusion or assimilation (Savaloja, 2021). In the education context, the acts have usually manifested as monolingual pedagogical practices, forced removal of cultural and linguistic heritage, as well as quick linguistic assimilation into the majority language used in schools (Savaloja, 2021). The denial of language use, or the exclusion that follows the inability to participate in a situation due to one's language skills, can be a distressing experience. For guardians who do not speak Finnish fluently, the participation in home-school cooperation might be limited in some manner, and thus also cause a multitude of emotions. However, similarly for the teachers, not being able to use a language that they are used to using in professional communication may be challenging.

This thesis begins with an overview into the central concepts of the research question: home-school cooperation, professional communication, and the policies guiding it. The first section of the thesis introduces the theoretical background of the research, which examines the different aspects of home-school cooperation, as well as of the central laws and regulations surrounding home-school cooperation that are in place in Finland. The focus is placed on the different forms

and roles of home-school cooperation, how linguistic and cultural diversity impacts the cooperation, and how teachers practice the professional communication in their work with homes.

The second section introduces the research design and methodology that was used in the collection of the research data. The research follows Van Manen's interpretation of hermeneutical phenomenology where the focus is on bringing forth individual experiences to understand the core of a certain phenomenon. In a typical manner for hermeneutic phenomenology, the data was collected through interviews with guardians and teachers in the North Ostrobothnia region of Finland. In the interviews, the participants were asked to reflect on their personal experiences of home-school cooperation. The interviews were then transcribed and analysed by using thematic analysis. The findings and their implications are discussed in the last two chapters, with the final chapter offering concluding remarks and suggestions for further research on the topic.

2. Home-school cooperation

The earlier research has found home-school cooperation to carry many benefits for the student. Some of these benefits include an increase in academic performance and in well-being, and a decrease in absences and discipline issues (Alanko, 2018; Dor, 2012; Sormunen et al., 2011). However, home-school cooperation can be a difficult term to define. Most are sure to have a rudimentary understanding of what this term might include. However, there are multiple different terms used to describe home-school cooperation, with each term having its own emphasis on a style of collaboration. In English speaking research context, terms such as cooperation, involvement and participation are used alongside with collaboration term (Orell & Pihlaja, 2022). In Finnish research, the terms used are yhteistyö (cooperation), kumppanuus (partnership), and osallisuus (participation) (Orell & Pihlaja, 2022).

The term partnership has been used to describe the dialogical nature of the home-school cooperation, where the focus is on working together, and each participant working according to their strengths (Häbig, 2015; Lämsä, 2017). For home, these strengths could be the knowledge of student's life outside of school, medical information, and other personal information. As for school, the strengths can often be more pedagogical in nature. However, the term partnership has been criticised for its failure to recognise the unbalanced power dynamics that are involved in home-school cooperation (Bæck, 2015; Lämsä, 2017). School and teachers have traditionally been seen as the authority on childrearing, making it possibly difficult for guardians to be viewed as professionals on some aspect of childrearing (Bæck, 2015; Sormunen et al., 2011).

Cooperation on the other hand has been viewed as being too one sided. With this understanding of the terms, there is often a clear divide of responsibilities between home and school (Lämsä, 2017). The term emphasises the school's part in the home-school cooperation, with information delivery from school to home being on the forefront of the collaboration (Lämsä, 2017). Home is thus often seen as passive recipient of information from the school. The home is expected to handle any issues related to raising a child, whereas school is viewed as the professional in the relationship (Lämsä, 2017; Sormunen et al., 2011). In this thesis, the term home-school cooperation has been used, as it is the term also used in the Finnish national core curriculum (FNCC) for basic education (Finnish National Agency for Education, 2014). A later chapter will focus more on the obligations of home-school cooperation as they are given in the FNCC and in the Finnish law.

2.1. Roles of participants: students, school and home

Although the importance of home-school cooperation is well known, it often seems to lack a standardised model of practice, as was also evident in the multiple definitions used to describe it. Due to this, the role of the participants in home-school cooperation can also change depending on the context in which the cooperation is conducted. There are three actors taking part in the home-school cooperation: the student, the school, and the guardians. This chapter will give an overview of the actors involved in the home-school cooperation, and what their roles have been found to include.

Student

Student's role in the home-school cooperation is central, albeit slightly different from the other two actors. Student is the centre of the cooperation, with the home-school cooperation aiming to improve student well-being (Males et al., 2014). Students' role in the cooperation can, however, vary greatly. Students are often not seen as active participants in the communication between home and school, but rather as an object of the act (Beveridge, 2004; Males et al., 2014). In the Finnish context, students are required to be participants for example on the conversation about their need for learning support (Finnish National Agency for Education, 2016). However, regarding home-school cooperation on other areas of education, there are no specific requirements for student participation in the Finnish core curriculum (Finnish National Agency for Education, 2016). Although students' contribution and role in the home-school cooperation is not the focus of this thesis, it is still an important one to bring forth as they are a central actor in the cooperation and impact the manner in which the home-school cooperation is organised, and how receptive the other actors are to the cooperation.

Student support for home-school cooperation is especially impactful for the guardians' receptiveness to cooperation (Häbig, 2015). Students' attitudes and openness towards home-school cooperation have been found to impact the guardians' participation rate and attitudes (Häbig, 2015). For example, a model created by Edwards and Alldred (2000) found that students' attitudes can generally be categorised into four different classes. Students' can either be active or passive participants in the home-school cooperation, with both categories further divided into negative and positive influence towards their guardians' participation (Edwards & Alldred, 2000). A student who has a positive outlook of home-school cooperation, and who is an active participant in the process, encourages their guardians to participate in the home-school cooperation (Edwards & Alldred, 2000). On the opposite end of the spectrum is a student who is an

active participant, but who has a negative view of home-school cooperation (Edwards & Alldred, 2000). Student with a negative outlook attempts to actively discourage their guardians from the home-school cooperation. The positive outlook is often more present in the younger pupils and in girls, whereas when students get older their support towards home-school cooperation decreases (Sacher, 2008, as cited in Häbig, 2015).

School

School as an actor includes both the teacher as well as other members of staff, such as the principal and special education teacher (Bæck, 2010b; Sormunen et al., 2011). Teachers have been traditionally seen as the authority in educational matters related to the students (Bæck, 2010b). However, the research into the importance of home-school cooperation has led to policy changes across education systems and has thus brought the home to participate in matters that have previously been seen as the school's responsibility (Sormunen et al., 2011). This has led to confusion and power struggles among teachers and the home to clarify what their roles are, and who should do what in this new cooperation (Alanko, 2018; Bæck, 2010b; Orell & Pihlaja, 2022). Teachers view themselves as highly educated professionals in educational matters, such as pedagogical choices in the classroom (Bæck, 2010b). Most teachers also seem to prefer to have a clear distinction in the participants duties in home-school cooperation (Bæck, 2010b; Sormunen et al., 2011). Teachers see their role in the home-school cooperation to consist mostly of information sharing in cases of disciplinary issues and of parent-teacher conferences when mandated (Orell & Pihlaja, 2022; Sormunen et al., 2011). Majority of teachers view home-school cooperation to be an important contributor to the academic and general well-being of a child (Bæck, 2010b).

Finnish national core curriculum states that schools have the responsibility to initiate and maintain sufficient home-school cooperation (Finnish National Agency for Education, 2016). However, home-school cooperation is heavily contextual, as there is no standard model that all schools follow (Alanko, 2018). This can also make it difficult for teachers to begin or to change the home-school cooperation at their school. Although teachers perceive home-school cooperation important, they also felt that they simply lack the time, and often training, to construct sustainable home-school cooperation procedures (Alanko, 2018; Dor, 2012; Sormunen et al., 2011). Due to the perceived time constraints, teachers may prioritize other educational matters

instead of home-school cooperation (Orell, 2020). The existing school norms may also challenge the teacher's desires to change the home-school cooperation to be more inclusive to homes (Orell, 2020).

Home

Home as a term in home-school cooperation often refers to the student's family, typically understood as the parents of the student (Dor & Biadys, 2013; Lynch, 2021; Sormunen et al., 2018). However, the home-school cooperation does not always occur between the parents of the student and the teacher, for a multitude of reasons. For this reason, this thesis understands home to refer to the guardians of the student, whether they are the parents or other legal guardians. As was the case with teachers, the home's role in the home-school cooperation can be uncertain at times. However, unlike teachers, home does not have as many requirements to participate in home-school cooperation nor to initiate it (LaRocque et al., 2011). Due to this, the home's role differs from one person to another.

Guardian involvement has been found to be impacted by the level of education, with highly educated guardians being more active and having a more positive view of home-school cooperation (Bæck, 2010a; Dor, 2012). Guardians with lower level of formal education reported being unsure of how to participate in the home-school cooperation, and questioning whether their knowledge of the topics discussed would be enough (Bæck, 2010a). Guardians with higher level of formal education however reported the lack of time as one of the main reasons to hinder their participation in the home-school cooperation (Bæck, 2010a). Guardians also felt uncertain of their role in the home-school cooperation and viewed it as the teacher's responsibility to initiate the contact and set the boundaries (Sormunen et al., 2011). Once contact was initiated, parents generally felt positively about the cooperation, albeit wished for more regular contact throughout the student's school journey (Sormunen et al., 2011). As the students get older, the amount of cooperation seems to decrease and more responsibility is placed on the student to convey messages and information to home (Dor, 2012; Sormunen et al., 2011).

In Finland, the guardians' role in the home-school collaboration is indeed mainly focused on communication (Orell, 2020). The guardians participate in sharing information with the school, ask questions about the student's progress or issues, and participate in parent-teacher conferences (Orell, 2020; Sormunen et al., 2018). The next chapter will introduce different stages of home-school cooperation more in-depth and compare them to the Finnish home-school cooperation practices.

2.2. Epstein's six types of involvement

One of the most prevalent researchers on the home-school cooperation field is Joyce Epstein. She has developed a model for home involvement in schools, that has been used in multitude of research papers since. Due to the prevalent nature of this model, it has also been used in the analysis section of this thesis in order to interpret the results of the research. The model, *six types of involvement*, attempts to categorise the different dimensions of guardian involvement in home-school cooperation. The first type of involvement is called parenting. The aim of this type of involvement is to share information from school to homes, in order to create an environment where the students are supported (Epstein, 1995). This can be done via workshops, community meetings, checkups, or lectures (Epstein, 1995). The parenting type of involvement has been a popular choice of home-school cooperation for decades in Finland (Sormunen et al., 2011).

The second type of involvement is called communication, which is undoubtedly the most common form of home-school cooperation in Finland (Sormunen et al., 2011). In this type of involvement, the focus is on sharing information from school to home, and from home to school in an effective manner (Epstein, 1995). This can include communication via email, phone, mobile platforms, or in person (Epstein, 1995). In Finland, the day-to-day communication is often organised through an electronic platform called Wilma. Wilma is a secure platform, where schools can communicate with parents through emails, add grades and other progress markers for students, and report absences (Alanko, 2018). The communication can also be organised through parents' evenings or parent-teacher meetings, which are often organised few times a year (Sormunen et al., 2011).

The third type of involvement is volunteering (Epstein, 1995). As the name implies, in this type of home involvement, the guardians are volunteering their time and resources to help the school or teachers in some manner. In many countries this volunteering can take the form of parent-teacher associations (PTA), where a dedicated group of parents and teachers communicate together and organise activities or events in school for both the students and the staff (Suomen Vanhempainliitto, 2020). The volunteering can also take place within the classrooms, where the guardians act as teacher assistants, or outside of the school perimeter in school trips (Epstein, 1995). Volunteering among guardians is not a very common type of home-involvement in Finland, according to Sormunen et al. (2011). Often this type of involvement only takes place

few times a year, the guardians either being audience members in school celebrations, or organisers in sales events when students are gathering money for class trips (Sormunen et al., 2011).

The fourth type of involvement in Epstein's (1995) model is called learning at home. In this involvement style, the home is given suggestions and information on how they can help the student with their academic growth at home. This is often done by informing the home of the homework policies in the school, inviting the guardians to participate in setting goals for the students' academic growth in the beginning of the year, and by giving suggestions on how they home can support the student in some subject areas (Epstein, 1995). The organisation of this type of involvement is heavily dependent on the school and on the educational context in which it is organised. In Finland, home support with learning is often assumed rather than explicitly asked about (Sormunen et al., 2011). On the other hand, there are some mandatory regulations related to this element of home involvement that will be talked about in a later chapter.

The fifth style of home involvement is decision making. In this style of involvement, the aim is to both inform the guardians of school policies and to take into account their views on the policy matters (Epstein, 1995). The work can take the form of PTA councils, independent advocacy groups, or separate networks to organise and distribute information to the guardians (Epstein, 1995). This category can blend with the volunteering aspect of Epstein's (1995) model, as both require the guardians to commit some time and resources towards the involvement. For example, the PTA is often both volunteering to organise events at the school, but also participates and represents the home community in school policy decisions (Suomen Vanhempainliitto, 2020).

The sixth type of home involvement is collaborating with the community. This final type of involvement is geared more towards the general community surrounding the school, rather than just the guardians of the students. The aim of community involvement is to gather important services and information to be distributed by the school to homes (Epstein, 1995). These services can be related to health or community safety, or to possible activities offered in the area to students and guardians (Epstein, 1995). Sormunen et al. (2011) do not identify this style of community involvement to be a strong part of the Finnish home-school cooperation style. However, this might vary among different schools as practices are often quite localised.

Table 1.

Type of involvement	Description
Parenting	Help homes to establish environments that support students' growth and wellbeing.
Communication	Establishing ways of communicating information between home and school about the information related to the student.
Volunteering	Guardians volunteer to help with some aspect of school life.
Learning at home	Providing information on how the home can support the student with their homework and academic achievement.
Decision making	Involving home in the construction of school policies (e.g. PTA).
Collaborating with community	Inviting the community to engage in the education alongside the school and sharing information in the school.

Epstein's (1995) model for parental involvement

2.3. Finnish law and the National Core Curriculum

Home-school cooperation is mandated in the Finnish law for basic education. The law (Basic Education Act 628/1998) legislates the framework for the Finnish basic education, such as the aims of the education, who should organise it, and what should be included in the curriculum. The law (Basic Education Act 628/1998) also mandates the organisation of home-school cooperation in four of its sections:

3§ Those providing education shall cooperate with pupils' parents/carers.

14§ As concerns pre-primary education, pupil welfare and home-school cooperation, the decision on the core curriculum referred to in subsection 2 shall be prepared by the National Board of Education in cooperation with the National Research and Development Centre for Welfare and Health.

15§ The education provider shall also determine the organisation of home-school cooperation and of pupil welfare laid down in the core curriculum.

16§ The learning plan must be prepared, unless there is an apparent reason not to do so, in collaboration with the pupil, the parent, carer or, where necessary, some other legal representative of the pupil.

The law offers the legal principles according to which the home-school cooperation has to be organised. However, the sections offer marginal understanding of the manner in which the cooperation should be organised, as the responsibility of this is given to the Finnish National Agency for Education and the organiser of the education. The Finnish National Agency for Education is responsible of designing the overarching principles of home-school cooperation, and the organiser of education, usually a municipality or a city, is responsible of implementing those principles in action.

The Finnish National Agency for Education has mandated these principles in the Finnish National Core Curriculum, the latest version of which was published in 2014 and implemented in 2016 (Finnish National Agency for Education, 2016; Orell, 2020). The curriculum covers the educational content and principles for the grades one through nine, or ages 7 through 15. The FNCC has gone through several reforms and styles, and the newest edition is no different, as the number of pages in the FNCC-14 nearly tripled from the last edition (Orell, 2020). The 2014 curriculum is divided into two separate sections: the general section and the subject specific section (Orell, 2020). The general section establishes the aims of basic education as well as the assessment and learning support principles (Finnish National Agency for Education, 2016; Orell, 2020). The subject specific section details the content that is to be taught, and what are the aims for assessment (Finnish National Agency for Education, 2016; Orell, 2020).

The guiding principles for home-school cooperation have received their own chapter in the general principles section of the curriculum. The section is titled '*Organisation of school work aiming to promote learning and well-being*', with sub-section of cooperation containing the information related to home-school cooperation (Finnish National Agency for Education, 2016, section 5). The section details the central aim of home-school cooperation and the responsibilities of home and school in caring for the students. According to FNCC –14, the main goal of home-school cooperation is to 'reinforce the single structure approach to basic education ... [and] to increase the openness of the activities ... [with] the cooperation [being] systematic' (Finnish National Agency for Education, 2016, section 5). The goal is thus to have all stakeholders of school cooperation to work together in order to support the students' growth and education in a systematic manner.

Within the home-school cooperation discussion in the FNCC-14, researchers have identified four different themes. The first theme is a discussion about values of the school and homes (Orell & Pihlaja, 2020). This discussion characterises the values presented in the FNCC-14, and also encourages for a discussion between home and school about their values (Orell, 2020; Orell & Pihlaja, 2020). Values are presented as a unifying factor in the school community, and the emphasis is placed on mutual respect and trust (Orell & Pihlaja, 2020). However, the FNCC-14 fails to elaborate on how these discussions about values should be organised (Orell, 2020). Due to this, the discussions might be quite superficial and lack the collaborative nature they were meant to have (Orell & Pihlaja, 2020). In addition, the lack of time reported by teacher in home-school cooperation (Dor, 2012) may direct the attention to more pressing issues. The FNCC-14 also offers somewhat contradictory information to the reader regarding values. Although the collaborative nature regarding value building is emphasised, the FNCC-14 also states that the values presented in it can be transferred as such to the schools (Orell, 2020). This combined with the notion of not seeing values as something that can possibly cause strife between home and school, diminishes the cooperative intent between home and school even further.

The second theme that was present in the FNCC-14 regarding home-school cooperation was culture (Orell & Pihlaja, 2020). Home-school cooperation was seen as something that can aid cultural understanding and help students to act accordingly in different contexts (Orell, 2020). However, much like was the case with discussion about values, there were not practical guidelines given of how the cultural understanding and mutual learning should be organised (Orell & Pihlaja, 2020). This might cause challenges to teachers, as their preconceptions and attitudes, not just towards home-school cooperation, but also towards different homes might impact how they decide to organise the cooperation (Orell & Pihlaja, 2020). Once again, the FNCC-14 only viewed the cooperation from a positive perspective, failing to account for the possible nuances of interpersonal relationships that occur within the cooperation.

The two last themes found in the FNCC-14 were future demands and support. These two themes can be quite intertwined, which is why they are presented here together. The theme of future support refers to the importance of sharing responsibility of childcare between home and school, especially in a preventative manner (Orell, 2020). The importance of home-school cooperation is highlighted especially during transitions from one educational stage to another, and during increased learning support needs (Orell, 2020; Orell & Pihlaja, 2020). During the need for cooperation, the homes have a right to receive information about the students' progress, perceived needs for support, and how the support is enacted in the school (Orell & Pihlaja, 2020). Unlike

in other forms of cooperation, home-school cooperation during learning support does not have as much voluntary involvement. Home, nor the student, are not allowed to decline support if the school identifies a need for it, the home is also required to participate in the planning of the support to some extent (Orell & Pihlaja, 2022).

The Finnish national core curriculum thus offers more guidelines on what some important factors to consider and include in home-school cooperation are. However, the practical guidelines on how the cooperation should be organised are not given, leaving the education organisers to create their own varied interpretations on how to operate. The next section examines the local curriculum of one education provider in Finland, and how they have described and implemented home-school cooperation to their practices.

2.3.1. Local level home-school cooperation

This section examines the local level curriculum of the city of Oulu. The local curriculum was developed in 2015, after the publication of the Finnish national core curriculum. The local level curriculum defines home-school cooperation to occur in the ordinary discussions, during common events, and during theme days (Oulun kaupunki, 2015). In the local level curriculum, the practices of home-school cooperation are specified further, with practical examples and guidelines given. City of Oulu states home-school cooperation to be an important part of the school culture, and on that should be developed to act as such (Oulun kaupunki, 2015).

Each grade is given its own student guidance guidelines, which work to shape and regulate the school's practices. Special care is given to the transition phases in the educational stages, between pre-school and first grade, 6th and 7th grade, and finally between 9th grade and upper-secondary education. Especially the transition between 6th and 7th grade has received very detailed guidelines, that give a good overview of how home-school cooperation can be organised in practice.

TIME	Guiding process/What to do	Responsible parties
6 th grade autumn semester	Timing of the transition <ul style="list-style-type: none"> meeting 	Elementary and lower secondary school principals, guidance counsellor, 6 th grade teacher
	Updating individual education plans	
6 th grade spring semester	Get to know the lower secondary school-e-material distributed to guardians and students	Head of communications
	Info nights from specialty subject schools	Specialty subject school principals, subject teachers, guidance counsellor
	Parent evenings for students and guardians	Elementary school principal, 6 th grade teacher, lower secondary school representative, other relevant representatives
	Transition to 7th grade <ul style="list-style-type: none"> guardian approves the proposed lower secondary school application to another school application and entrance tests for specialty schools 	Elementary and lower secondary school principals, school secretary
	Decisions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> specialty school application results results for those who applied to another school 	Administrative secretary, lower secondary school principal
	Transferring student records from elementary to lower secondary school	School secretary
	Specialty and small group applications	Elementary school special education teacher, elementary school teacher
	Preparing for studying in lower secondary school <ul style="list-style-type: none"> QA session with guidance counsellor and tutor students getting to know the lower secondary school session with a homeroom teacher 	Guidance counsellor, 6 th grade teacher, tutor students, homeroom teacher, subject teachers
	Parent evening for students and guardians	Lower secondary school principal, guidance counselor, homeroom teacher
	Updating individualised education plans	6 th grade teacher, student, guardian, and if needed, special education teacher and multi-professional student welfare group
	Knowledge transfer	6 th grade teacher, elementary school special education teacher, lower secondary school homeroom teacher and special education teacher
	Forming the 7 th grade classes	Lower secondary school principal, 6 th grade teacher, special education teacher
	7 th grade autumn semester	Getting to know your 7 th grade
Organising learning support		Homeroom teacher, subject teacher, special education teacher
Home-school cooperation in lower secondary school <ul style="list-style-type: none"> parent evening progression discussion PTA organisation 		Principal, homeroom teacher, guidance counsellor, guardian, student

Translated from the City of Oulu local curriculum, student guidance manual (2021, pp. 8-9).

As can be seen from the table, the local curriculum, like the FNCC-14, focuses on the importance of assessment and progression discussions between home, school, and the student. These discussions are organised yearly in all grades, in addition to other forms of home-school cooperation (Oulun kaupunki, 2015). The discussions follow predetermined guidelines, which have been introduced, familiarized, and discussed by all parties before the meeting (Oulun kaupunki, 2015). In these discussions the student's progress is discussed with the help of their schoolwork and grades, which act as demonstrations of the progress (Oulun kaupunki, 2015). The discussion should focus mainly on the positive steps that have been made and how the progress can be supported in the future (Oulun kaupunki, 2015). Another form of home-school cooperation visible in the table, are parent evenings. In these evenings, the guardians, and students, gather together with the school representative to receive information about pressing issues or topics (Oulun kaupunki, 2015; Oulun kaupunki, 2021). These evenings are specifically designed for information transfer between home and school, and thus parents' evenings as well as progression discussions could be categorized to represent parenting, communication and learning at home -involvement styles as depicted by Epstein (1995).

In addition, the local level curriculum also gives more insight into the organisation of parent-teacher associations (PTA). As can be seen from the table above (Oulun kaupunki, 2021), the organisation of PTA is specifically mentioned as a form of home-school cooperation. The local curriculum states that PTAs or similar organisation should be organised in every school, in order for the home to sufficiently be part of the schools' policy planning and improvement efforts (Oulun kaupunki, 2015). PTAs are viewed as important resources in communication and community engagement, as they consist of guardians from different grade levels (Oulun kaupunki, 2015). PTAs fill the role of decision making from Epstein's (1995) involvement model, leaving only the volunteering and collaborating with community out of the cooperation models presented in the student guidance manual (Oulun kaupunki, 2021). However, as stated earlier, these forms of home-school cooperation are not that common (Sormunen et al., 2011.) Volunteering in Finnish schools often takes the form of participating in school events as an audience member (Sormunen et al., 2011), indicating that this form of involvement may take a more informal approach than the regulated processes described in the local curriculum. Same might be the case with community involvement, some schools may be more involved with their surrounding community than others.

From the descriptions in the Finnish law, the national core curriculum and one local curriculum, it is apparent that home-school cooperation is purposely left vague in many areas. The documents only mandate that home-school cooperation has to take place, and what are the central principles of the cooperation. As stated in the Finnish law (Perusopetuslaki 628/1998), the local education organiser is the one mandating the organisation of the cooperation in a more detailed way. However, even within the documents provided by the local education organiser, the details of home-school cooperation are in large detail left for the individual schools and teachers to decide. The local curriculum (Oulun kaupunki, 2015); Oulun kaupunki, 2021) does mandate the use of parents' evenings and progression conversations per each grade, but little is stated about the practical nature of the proceedings. This may leave teachers, and especially new teachers, to conduct varying practices of home-school cooperation, some of which may not yield as beneficial results as others. On the other hand, teacher autonomy is well respected in Finland (Chung, 2023; Haapaniemi et al., 2021), and may allow for a better adaptation of practices according to the needs and wishes of the guardians.

In addition to the regulations stated in the various documents, home-school cooperation is also impacted by personal and societal factors, as already briefly discussed in the home-school participant section. The next chapter will focus on the minority language status in home-school cooperation, and how this nuance specifically may bring new aspects to the cooperation that have to be considered.

2.4.Diversity in home-school cooperation

In 2022, there were almost 500 000 people living in Finland, who spoke some other language than Finnish, Swedish or Sami (Tilastokeskus, 2023). The most common languages spoken among these people were Russian, Estonian, Arabic, English, and Somali (Tilastokeskus, 2023). When looking at young and school age children (0-14 years), the most common languages were Somali, Swahili, Arabic, Tamil and Albanian (Tilastokeskus, 2023). The children were most likely to live in southern Finland, with the Uusimaa region near the capital area being the most popular choice among families (Tilastokeskus, 2023). Compared to Uusimaa region where the percentage of linguistically diverse children was around 29%, in Northern Ostrobothnia the percentage was only around 3% (Tilastokeskus, 2023). Based on these statistics, the teachers in Southern Finland are far more likely to interact with linguistically diverse families than their peers in other regions.

The increase in linguistically diverse families also means an increase in need for linguistically aware home-school cooperation. As discussed in an earlier chapter, home-school cooperation can have many factors that hinder the participation of home. Those factors also apply in the home-school cooperation of linguistically diverse families (Coady et al., 2009). However, in addition, the cooperation may be impacted by the cultural and linguistic differences between home and school. Cultural differences may refer to factors such as differences in values, how the school system operates and home involvement practices. Differences in values can refer to values of religion, or what behaviour is expected and accepted in school and home (Schneider & Arnot, 2018). The difference in values can also be closely related to the possible lack of knowledge on how the school system operates. Schools can often make assumptions about the homes' knowledge on the schools' operations, policies, and resources, when in fact, the knowledge may not be accessible to homes in the first place (Coady et al., 2009; Linse & van Vlack, 2015). The school website, the policy documents and other information outlets might not be easily available in the home's language(s), or even in English, leaving the homes to rely on schools to convey that information to them (Piller et al., 2023). In return, the schools may assume that the home has already acquired that information, or they might not even consider that some practices are different in the schools that the guardians completed their education in (Schneider & Arnot, 2018). For example, grading can differ from one country to another, and even from one grade level to another. If guardians are not familiar with the grading style of a school, they might lack appropriate knowledge on how the student is progressing and if they need additional support in some area (Schneider & Arnot, 2018).

The cultural differences are also visible in the manner in which the guardians engage with the school. Depending on the upbringing of the guardians, they have their own assumptions and expectations on how home-school cooperation should be organized. If the guardians have been brought up in a different school system, they are familiar with the roles and proceedings of that system (Schulz, 2010). Arriving to the new school system might thus cause confusion and uncertainty to both the school and the guardians, as the engagement expectations and participant roles have changed. This can lead to misunderstandings, as schools may perceive the guardians' engagement styles to be inappropriate or lacking in some manner (Monzó, 2010). This also highlights the reason why strict home engagement models, such as the Epstein's (1995) model described earlier in this thesis, do not always represent the actual engagement levels of homes (Schneider & Arnot, 2018). To mitigate the risks of misunderstandings and confusion, the

school should aim to communicate the school policies and expectations clearly to homes, as well as be receptive to different home engagement styles.

However, the communication between home and school may also be a challenging task, if the participants do not share a common language or the language skills of one party are not fluent. Teachers and school staff are often highly educated professionals on their fields, leading them to be comfortable in using professional jargon in the school context with homes (Linse & van Vlack, 2015). The use of professional jargon may be difficult to understand even to those guardians who are fluent in the language, but especially if the guardian is unfamiliar with the school system and has limited language skills (Linse & van Vlack, 2015). Depending on the resources of the schools and what their policies regarding home-school communication are, the school can attempt to offer accessibility modifications to the linguistically diverse guardians. These modifications include things such as translating the school newsletters and policies to the home language or to English and having translators available in school events and parent-teacher conferences (Coady et al., 2009). The use of translators in home-school communication ensures that all parties understand each other and can ask clarifying questions. However, as is the case with all home-school communication, the power imbalance between the teacher and guardians still remains and may even be exacerbated by the use of a translator (Baraldi & Gavioli, 2023). Although translators are trained to keep the original meaning and tone of the discussion, translating is an interpretation of the discourse, where the translator has to make choices impacting the tone and wording of the sentences. These choices in turn influence the manner in which the translation is understood by the other parties involved in the discussion (Baraldi & Gavioli, 2023). In addition to professional translators, the schools may decide to use the students or other personnel as translators between the school and home. The reasons for using non-professional individuals as translators are multifaceted and complicated. The schools may not have time or resources to acquire a professional translator, or they are not aware of the resources available to them (García-Sánchez et al., 2011; Orozco Jutorán, 2022). However, especially the use of children as translators is a complicated matter, as the role of translator changes their original position as a student. Some students report positive feelings of being able to translate for their guardians or other members of the community (Ceccoli, 2022). On the other hand, the act of translation in itself has been found to possibly cause stress and anxiety, especially in situations where the participant roles and discussions are charged (Orozco Jutorán, 2022). Due to this, the use of children as translators should be mediated carefully and avoided when possible.

2.5. Professional communication

So far, this thesis has discussed of the legalities of home-school cooperation, what practices are enacted in it, and how working with linguistically diverse families may impact the cooperation. One factor that is yet to be deeply discussed is the professional communication practices of teachers during these periods of cooperation. Professional communication is discourse that occurs between two actors who share a professional relationship, and has a purpose related to the profession or actions in the profession (Weigand, 2012). In the educational setting, the actors are teachers, other school staff, students and guardians, and actions related to the profession can be discussion of instruction, conferences, and information sharing.

Within professional communication, several different communication models can be identified. Communication can either be formal or informal, structural, or unplanned, commanding or relational (Friend & Cook, 2014; White, 2016). Formal communication occurs between two or more actors in an organisation and is vertical in nature. In this communication style, the information is delivered from administration to teachers or the opposite (White, 2016). In informal communication, the information is delivered from one actor to another through the word of mouth (White, 2016). These two communication forms are mainly used between school staff and contain information about the organisation or policies of the school (White, 2016). Structural and unplanned communication on the other hand can occur between two different actors in the schools, such as teacher and guardian, or teacher and student. Structural communication refers to communication that has been pre-planned and has a specific purpose, such as discussing the progress of a student between teacher and guardians (Friend & Cook, 2014). Unplanned communication in turn takes place when the communication is not scheduled nor follows any specific agenda (Friend & Cook, 2014). Unplanned communication can occur during open houses, school events, or during pick-up of students after school. The conversations can include topics such as the events of the day, notes about student's behaviour or presence in the school, or any questions the guardians may have to the teacher.

Whilst the conversation situations can be varied, so can the manners in which the communication is handled. Teacher's professional communication can either be commanding or relational in its purpose. Commanding purpose of a communication is for the teacher to relay information from them to another actor, often to a student in a classroom setting (White, 2016). In classroom the nature of the communication is cyclical, the teacher conveys the information to the students, who in turn give feedback to the teacher about whether the communication was successful or

not (White, 2016). If the teacher has not succeeded in paraphrasing the information to the students, they attempt to do it again, and the cycle continues until the information has been successfully passed on to the student (White, 2016). The relational function of communication on the other hand focuses on the interpersonal relationships between the actors participating in the communication (White, 2016). The main purpose of the communication is not to share information, but rather to focus on improving and analysing the emotional relations between the communicators (White, 2016).

Table 2.

<i>Communication style</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Participants</i>
Formal communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Information delivery is vertical. - Through meetings or email. 	Between school staff
Informal communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Information delivery is horizontal. - Through word of mouth. 	Between school staff
Structural communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Meetings are scheduled or mandated. - Has a specific topic. 	Between teacher and student, or teacher and guardian.
Unplanned communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Meetings are spontaneous. - Does not follow a specific agenda. 	Between teacher and guardian.
Commanding communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Relaying information. 	Between teacher and student, or teacher and guardian
Relational communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Nurturing interpersonal connections. 	Between two different participants.

Different communication styles and their participants.

Some of the skills that can impact the relational communication are nonverbal cues, professional and ethical skills, as well as communication positions. Nonverbal cues include factors such as eye contact, posture, facial expressions, tone of speech, gestures, and physical appearance. The implications of nonverbal cues to communicator impressions can be almost immediate, and greatly impact the tone of the conversation (Martikainen, 2019). For example, teachers

with formal clothing and stiff posture, who were turned away from the other communicator and made no eye contact, were described as distant teachers (Martikainen, 2019). Teachers who smiled, had relaxed posture, made eye contact and were turned towards the other communicators were described as friendly and communicative by students (Martikainen, 2019). The importance and immediate impact are also what makes nonverbal communication complex in culturally diverse contexts. The tone and volume of voice can, for example, be interpreted differently by those coming from different cultures (Tichnor-Wagner et al., 2019). In one culture, it may be preferred to use a louder and more projecting voice to indicate friendliness, whereas in another culture the use of that same voice may be interpreted as confrontational (Tichnor-Wagner et al., 2019).

In addition to nonverbal cues, the professional and ethical communication skills of the teacher also impact the tone of the communication. Professional and ethical communication refer to the manner in which the interaction is conducted. In home-school cooperation, that communication takes the form of institutional talk. Institutional talk refers to communication taking place in a structured manner, such as teacher-parent conferences, interviews, or healthcare communication (Bijnen, 2019). In such communication, different participants can assume different power positions. A person with more power guides the conversation and the topic to flow in a predetermined manner (Bijnen, 2019). This is often necessary, in order for the conversation to advance and produce wanted results. However, the power imbalance can lead to the abuse of said power. This can manifest itself as the one with more power dominating the conversation in terms of time or by limiting what are appropriate or accepted methods to deal with an issue (Bijnen, 2019). Based on the institutional talk model (Caronia & Orletti, 2019), in home-school cooperation the participant with more power is often the teacher as they represent the institution, leaving the guardians to follow the teacher's lead.

As home-school cooperation should be based on *cooperation*, participants should aim to avoid major power imbalances, as they may hinder the participation of other parties. To promote equal and open relationships, communication should be honest, respectful, and open, whilst also remaining confidential and consensual (Friend & Cook, 2014). Guardians focus both on what is said, and how the topics are conveyed; the what of the conversation is aided by the how of conversation (Mann et al., 2023). In the research conducted by Mann et al. (2023) the guardians reported appreciation and positive notions towards teachers who were vulnerable, honest, warm, and open to cooperation. Vulnerability was conveyed via the expression of emotions regarding the student and the situation at hand (Mann et al., 2023). This made the teacher appear

more down to earth and easier to approach. The teachers should also be open to cooperation, be interested in the guardians' view and search for a common way to solve any issues (Mann et al., 2023). Honest and respectful approach to communication was appreciated, with the emphasis remaining on cooperative problem solving and positive solution-focused strategies (Mann et al., 2023).

Besides the characteristics and practices found in the Mann et al. (2023) study, the teachers should also be familiar with the intercultural communication to aid their professional and ethical communication skills (Friend & Cook, 2014). Although intercultural communication can be understood and defined in various ways, most researchers agree that the central aim of it is to develop skills to work in a multicultural setting and with people from different backgrounds (Chen, 2017; Imsa-Ard, 2023). Intercultural communication skills include respect, open-mindedness, and curiosity, which enable the person to gain knowledge of the other person's culture (Álvarez Valdivia & González Montoto, 2017; Imsa-Ard, 2023). The knowledge and respect then allow the person to shift their perspective and modify their behaviour accordingly (Álvarez Valdivia & González Montoto, 2017). In terms of communication, being mindful of the manner in which one communicates is important, as established earlier. This does not simply include nonverbal communication or tones, but also the undertone of the conversation. For example, joking or sarcasm may transfer poorly across cultures and languages, which is why they should be used sparingly and only when the communicators have established a good rapport with one another (Friend & Cook, 2014).

Professional communication is thus formed of various interlocking parts that impact the success of the conversation. These factors depend on the purpose and manner of the conversation, as well as personal and cultural conversation styles. Teachers require good communications skills to navigate the different communication situations included in their work, especially when conducting home-school cooperation with families from various backgrounds.

3. Research methodology

Qualitative research is not a single type of research method, but rather an umbrella term for a host of different approaches and methods. In general, qualitative research can be said to focus on examining the subjective experiences or meanings allocated to a 'social or human problem' (Creswell, 2013, p. 44). Whereas quantitative research follows a set of predetermined data collection and analysis methods to ensure the generalisation of the results to a larger audience, qualitative research may have a smaller data set and instead delve deeper into the lived experiences of the subjects (Creswell, 2013; Punch & Oancea, 2014).

This thesis attempts to examine how home-school cooperation is organised when the two actors lack a common language, and what practices they have experienced to be beneficial for the communication. As there is no one set way in which schools can organise the collaboration in this scenario, the collected data will reflect the subjective experiences of the participants. Due to this, the qualitative research method, and specifically the phenomenological research method was chosen.

3.1. Phenomenological research

Phenomenology was developed by Edmund Husserl in the early 1900's, and further defined by multiple researchers after him (Cerbone, 2014). Phenomenology has become an important research approach in many fields, such as education, social sciences, and psychology, interested in the human experience (Creswell, 2013). Phenomenology as a research approach is complex to define, in fact Husserl himself was known to be open to questioning and redefining phenomenology throughout his life (Creswell, 2013). Many researchers have developed their own approach to phenomenology, with some researchers, such as Husserl himself, focusing on reducing the impact of the researcher and focusing on the experiences of the participants (Moran, 2000). Some on the other hand have emphasised the importance of constructing meaning together with the participants (Finlay, 2012). These two approaches are also known as transcendental phenomenology and hermeneutical phenomenology.

3.1.1. Hermeneutic phenomenology

This thesis follows the hermeneutic phenomenology. To understand this approach, we first need to define the terms *hermeneutic* and *phenomenology*. *Phenomenology* refers to the science of

understanding a phenomenon and ‘aim[ing] for fresh, complex, rich descriptions of a phenomenon as it is concretely lived’ (Finlay, 2012, p.17). Phenomenon is a lived experience, shared by a group, such as, experience of marriage or grief. *Hermeneutics* is the study of text or other medium, with the focus on interpretation and translation (Henriksson & Friesen, 2012). Hermeneutic phenomenology then refers to the *interpretative study of lived experiences*.

Hermeneutic phenomenology was developed by Martin Heidegger, a former student of Husserl (Beck, 2021). Transcendental phenomenology, promoted by Husserl, searched for the essence of phenomenon, what makes the phenomenon what it is (Beck, 2021). In this research style, the researcher attempts to apply an attitude of *epochē* to the research (Larsen & Adu, 2021). In other words, the researcher is focused on being an objective observer of the experience, trying to bracket away all their preexisting knowledge that could impact the research. Heidegger turned his attention away from the epistemological search towards the idea of ontological study of phenomena, the nature of being in the world (Henriksson & Friesen, 2012). Heidegger based his view of phenomenology to the prospect of human beings being intertwined with the world and time surrounding them (Beck, 2021). Heidegger called humans having a *Dasein*, the ability to worry about their position and themselves in the world (Beck, 2021). Because of this, he argued that conducting phenomenology in transcendental manner is impossible and counter-productive (Beck, 2021). To Heidegger (1985), phenomenology’s purpose is to bare open the phenomenon and reveal its nature. This cannot be done without considering the world and time in which the phenomenon occurs.

Although Heidegger founded the hermeneutic standpoint to phenomenology, his theories have further been developed by other hermeneutic researchers. One of such researchers is Max van Manen, who developed his take on the hermeneutic phenomenology in the 1990s (Beck, 2021). To him (van Manen, 2017, p. 779), phenomenology ‘enthalls us with insights into the enigma of life as we experience it’. This means that through the subjective experiences of people, the researcher can identify central ideas related to the lived phenomenon. To do this, the research needs to be interpretive on two levels: on research level and on the participant level. For the researcher, the interpretation impacts the data analysis, especially how the researcher understands the gathered data based on their understanding of the topic (Finlay, 2012). On the participant level, the researcher tries to interpret the participants meaning making based on the research context (Finlay, 2012). Although all phenomenology is descriptive in some level, van

Manen finds hermeneutic take on the phenomenology necessary, as interpretation of the experience reveals the possible hidden meanings and qualities of a phenomenon (Finlay, 2012).

As previously stated, in transcendental phenomenology the researcher aims to stay objective to preserve the essence of the phenomenon. The practice of doing this is called reduction or bracketing. In reduction, the researcher reflects on their preexisting knowledge and biases of the phenomenon and brackets them away, in hopes of finding the true essence of the participant's experience (Beck, 2021). As the hermeneutic phenomenology relies heavily on interpretation, transcendental reduction is not possible. The researcher 'cannot afford to adopt an attitude of so-called scientific disinterest' (Van Manen, 1997, p.33). Instead, van Manen points the researcher to attain a phenomenological attitude, a hermeneutic reduction. Phenomenological attitude calls the research to engage in continuous reflection, acknowledge their biases, and be open to their understanding to be challenged or changed during the research (Finlay, 2012). This means that researcher is allowed to have a preexisting knowledge of the topic or use frameworks to study the phenomenon, but they have to be open to change or abandon that knowledge if their research points them to another direction. To achieve this state of phenomenological attitude, I engaged on continuous reflection throughout the research and attempted to let the participants and data lead the interpretation of the experience. To aid this, the research questions were formatted to be as objective as possible and during the analysis, a data first approach was utilized.

3.1.2 Challenges with hermeneutic phenomenology

Hermeneutic phenomenological, and phenomenological researchers in general, often receive critique on their chosen research methods. Often the critique relates to the interpretive and descriptive frameworks of phenomenology. The critiques may question how reliable the researcher can be if they do not bracket their experiences away, or if that practice can even be successful (Finlay, 2012). As I am following the hermeneutic phenomenology, the researcher does not have to bracket away all their preexisting knowledge, but rather engage in continuous reflection of their knowledge in relation to the research data. As a master's student in primary education, my practical knowledge of home-school cooperation when guardians do not speak Finnish is limited. However, I acknowledge that after conducting the literature review, I have developed some hypotheses of the outcome of the study that I will have to consider when conducting the research. To bracket and mitigate the influence of my knowledge on the topic, I

have paid careful attention in drafting my research questions for the data collection and will be analysing the data in two separate stages. First on its own according to the hermeneutic principles, and later by reflecting them to the theoretical framework presented in this thesis.

In the past, there has also been discussion about whether phenomenology, or any qualitative research for that matter, can be critiqued based on the quantitative research validity markers. Such markers would include researcher objectivity, generalisation or standardisation of the results, and a specific framework that is followed (Cerbone, 2014; Creswell, 2013). Qualitative researchers have stated that these measures of validity do not always transfer to their research methods and limit the scope and depth of research they would otherwise be able to conduct (Beck, 2021). On the other hand, some researchers have emphasised how important it is to follow a certain standardised framework, even in qualitative studies (Beck, 2021). That brings us to the other concern when conducting phenomenological research, the possibility of method slurring. Method slurring refers to the researcher using research methods and analysis methods that do not align with their research method (Beck, 2021). To avoid this, the researcher should clearly state what methodology and approach they are using and apply this mindset throughout the study (Beck, 2021). In the previous chapter I introduced the research approach that I have used in this thesis, the hermeneutic phenomenology. I also introduced the major researchers that have developed the approach. In this thesis I have especially followed Max van Manen's approach to hermeneutic phenomenology. In the next chapter, I will detail the data collection and analysis methods that I have used alongside van Manen's approach.

3.2.Data collection and analysis

In qualitative research, the methods for data collection are as varied as the research methods. As this thesis has utilized phenomenological research approach, the data collection method should reflect the wondering nature of the approach. The most often used methods with this approach are artworks, interviews, and autobiographical essays (Creswell, 2013).

In this thesis I have used interviews to gather data from the research participants. Interviews are one of the most common qualitative data collection methods, due to their flexibility (Punch & Oancea, 2014). Interviews are used as a way to gain insight into the participants experiences, emotions and meaning makings of a certain topic (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015; Punch & Oancea, 2014). Interviews are often seen as a simple research method, but they often require extensive knowledge and reflection on the part of the researcher (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015). Interview

research does not follow a set of universal guidelines, but multiple researchers have developed their own instruction models on how to proceed when designing an interview study. The below figure presents one of these models by Punch and Oancea (2014).

Table 3.

<i>Stage</i>	<i>Key issues</i>
Preparing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Clarifying the research topic – Literature review – Defining concepts and key words – Deciding on the interview type
Producing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Themes and questions – Grouping questions under suitable topics
Pruning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Checking the relevance of interview questions – Deleting irrelevant questions – Ensuring the answerability of the questions
Polishing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Reflecting on the position of the researcher – Reflecting on the sensitivity of the topic – Preparing the interview structure
Piloting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Piloting the interview and returning to previous steps when needed

Interview guide by Punch and Oancea (2014).

I have followed these guidelines in the planning of the research design, along with van Manen’s phenomenological influence. In the first stage of the model (Punch & Oancea, 2014), I decided on the topic of the research and formulated the research questions. After the initial stages, I began the composition of the theoretical background by reading through previous research, which included academic journal articles and books written by researchers. After gaining sufficient understanding of the topic, it was time to decide the data collection method. Although I had expressed interest to interviews before, now it was time to specify what interview type would be appropriate for the thesis and the research approach.

3.2.1. Interview styles

I begin this section by defining what interview means in this research context. Interviews have become an essential part of our world, we are faced with them in our personal lives, in the news, and in our workplaces. However, all these interviews have a different aim. A news interview might seek to provide information to a wide audience on a specific topic, whereas clinical interview seeks to understand the personal medical history of a patient (Galletta, 2013). In phe-

nomenology, the interview aims to achieve two goals. First, to gather data for deeper understanding of a phenomena, and secondly, to develop a relationship with the interview participant (van Manen, 1997).

As is often the case in qualitative research, there is no one way in which to conduct the interviews. Interviews can either be realist, contextual or constructionist interviews in their manner of knowledge construction. In realist interviews, the researcher is an objective observer who does not participate in the construction of knowledge (Punch & Oancea, 2014). In contextual interview, the focus is on the experiences of the interviewers whilst they use a service or experience a phenomenon (Punch & Oancea, 2014). These types of interviews are often used to gain insight into user experience in various fields. Finally, the interview focus that this thesis has utilized: the constructionist interview model. In this interview model, the researcher is an active participant in the interview process and co-constructs the knowledge together with the participant (Punch & Oancea, 2014).

In addition to the researcher's position in the interview, there are also different ways in which the interview structure can be organised. Generally, interviews can be divided into structured interviews, semi-structured interviews, and unstructured interviews (Punch & Oancea, 2014). Structured interviews are interviews with standardized questions, often taking the forms of surveys (Punch & Oancea, 2014). Due to their standardized nature, they are often used in quantitative research, when gathering a large scale of generalisable data. Unstructured interviews on the other hand are interviews that do not follow a generalized structure, and the researcher's goal is to encourage the participant to share their experiences in an in-depth manner (Punch & Oancea, 2014). These two interview types represent the opposite ends of interview spectrum. To balance them out, semi-structured interviews were formed. Van Manen recommends the use of semi-structured interviews, especially with beginning researchers. Although he acknowledges the benefits of using unstructured interviews with phenomenology, he also states that often these types of interviews may lead the researcher to stray from their topic (van Manen, 1997). Semi-structured interviews on the other hand 'create openings for a narrative to unfold, while also including questions informed by theory' (Galletta, 2013, p. 3). This allows researcher to gain in-depth knowledge of an experience from the interview participant, whilst still being able to guide the direction of the interview.

Semi-structured interviews generally have three separate sections: the opening section, the middle section, and the concluding section. In the opening section, the interviewer introduces the

purpose of the study, thanks the participant for their time, and obtains an informed consent form from the participant (Galletta, 2013). The questions in the opening section are open ended, in order to allow the participant to share their views and experiences of the phenomenon (Galletta, 2013). Whilst the participant is telling their narrative, the researcher should take note of important topics related to the research phenomenon, to return to them later on in the interview. The researcher can help the interview to move along with probes asking for clarification on certain topics, or by repeating the last sentence spoken by the participant in a questioning manner (Galletta, 2013; van Manen, 1997).

In the second section of the interview, the researcher returns to the sections they have noted to be of specific interest in the first part of the interview. The researcher can now move on to more specific and narrow questions, to gain in-depth knowledge of said topics (Galletta, 2013). This form of returning back to the beginning narrative of the participant continues in the concluding section of the interview as well. Here the researcher can ask their final clarifications of the discussions they have had and move towards lighter questions to conclude the interview. The researcher should offer the interviewee a change to also add their last notions or thoughts of the topics, before closing the interview and thanking the participant of their contribution (Galletta, 2014). For a more detailed overview of the interview questions, please refer to the appendix A and B.

3.3. Research participants

As the research topic for this thesis is about the experience of home school collaboration, when the guardians do not speak Finnish fluently, it was important to interview both teachers and guardians. Although this thesis has framed the research question to reflect the side of the social norm in Finland, where the schools speak Finnish, the question could have been framed from the guardians' side as well; experience of home-school cooperation, when the school does not communicate in the guardians' language. This duality of the phenomenon requires the research to account for both the guardians and the teachers point of views in order to acquire a comprehensive understanding of home-school cooperation.

The research included three guardians and two teachers that were interviewed. The participants were reached mostly through personal connections via telephone. The guardians came from different ethnic and linguistic backgrounds, two from Ukraine and one from the United States. The Ukrainian guardians spoke Ukrainian and Finnish, and the guardian from the US spoke

English and Finnish. The teachers were all native Finnish speakers, but also spoke other languages such as English and Swedish. The two Ukrainian guardians, a married couple, were interviewed together, whereas other participants had individual interviews. In the results section, all interviewees were addressed as guardian (G) or teacher (T) and a number to indicate whose interview is discussed. They/them pronouns were used for all participants, as the interviews did not include gender identifications.

Table 4.

<i>Participant</i>	<i>Nationality</i>	<i>Languages spoken</i>
Guardian 1 (G1), guardian 2 (G2)	Ukraine	Ukrainian, Finnish
Guardian 3 (G3)	The United States	English, Finnish, Spanish, Turkish
Teacher 1 (T1)	Finland	Finnish, English
Teacher 2 (T2)	Finland	Finnish, English, Swedish

Participant background information.

3.4. Thematic analysis

Thematic content analysis is a common method to be used with phenomenological research approach. Each researcher has their own take and emphasis on conducting thematic analysis. I have followed van Manen's general phenomenological analysis, which places emphasis on understanding what the narratives are an example of (Creswell, 2013). Thematic analysis is used as a method of developing and interpreting consistent patterns found from the gathered data (Braun & Clarke, 2022). As van Manen's structure for thematic analysis is fairly vague, I have employed the model by Braun and Clarke (2022) to go alongside with van Manen's theory.

There are six steps for conducting thematic analysis. The first step is to familiarise yourself with the data. In this stage, the researcher reads and re-reads the data sources over and over again, until they have become familiar, immersed, with it (Braun & Clarke, 2022). Van Manen calls this step the holistic approach to data, as the researcher is concerned with the whole of the data, not just focusing on one part of it (van Manen, 1990, as cited in Creswell, 2013). After the researcher has become familiar with the data, they begin to code it. Coding is a process where the researcher begins to identify sections of the data that relate to the research question (Braun & Clarke, 2022). Van Manen begins this process first with a selective approach to the data, this means that he examines the data by highlighting certain sentences that relate to the research

question (Creswell, 2013). Next, he goes over the data again but this time focusing on each sentence of the data to identify any hidden meanings, this is called line-by-line approach (Creswell, 2013). Throughout the coding process, the researcher should reflect on their position on the data and the data analysis, as this will inevitably impact the analysis process (Braun & Clarke, 2022).

After coding, the focus moves to forming themes around the codes. Thematising, much like coding, is also a process. Braun and Clarke (2022) have identified three stages of thematising. The first stage is to form initial themes, where all codes are situated under a theme. In the second stage, the researcher reviews the choices they have made when allocating codes under themes, they may change some codes under other themes, or remove themes completely if they are not related to the research (Braun & Clarke, 2022). In this stage, the themes are also allocated under van Manen's overarching themes of lived space, lived body, lived time and lived relationship (Beck, 2021). Lived spaces, or spatiality, refers to the experience of space surrounding the participant during the experience (Beck, 2021). For example, how the participant perceives the space around them, do they feel safe or like they belong there. In a same vein of the participant experiencing their surroundings, lived time refers to how a person experiences the passage of time in the moment, not the actual time spent (Beck, 2021). Lived body on the other hand refers to the reactions of the body during the experience (Beck, 2021). This can mean reactions such as sweating, or feelings about the body's capabilities in the moment. Finally, the lived relationship is how a person experiences their relation to other participants in the moment, or how the experience impacts their relationship to others (Beck, 2021). After the allocation of themes to van Manen's categories, the thematization moves to the third stage where the themes are refined once again, and given their final names (Braun & Clarke, 2022).

Following van Manen's analysis technique, I identified sentences that described the essence of the phenomenon for each interview participant. For example, phrases *I show my daughter that I'm involved in her school (G3)* and *We are responsible for teaching, but home is responsible for ensuring the learning and care continues at home (T2)* discuss the responsibilities and duties of different actors in home-school cooperation and were thus allocated under the Responsibility code. These phrases originally formed 12 codes that were later combined under four essential themes that revealed the phenomenological essence of home-school cooperation in multilingual context: *communication methods, language, professional cooperation* and *emotions*. These themes were again allocated under van Manen's four lived world categories.

Table 5.

<i>Life world</i>	<i>Essential themes</i>	<i>Codes</i>
Lived space and time	Communication methods	Wilma
		Phone calls
		Messages
		Face-to-face meetings
		Accommodations
		Other
Lived relation	Language	Language of communication
		Cultural differences
	Professional cooperation	Peer support
		Teacher mannerism
	Responsibility	
Lived body	Emotions	Emotions

Categories developed through the interview data.

4. Research findings

This section of the thesis is divided into two chapters. As an integral part of the phenomenological process is for the researcher to inspect the data for its own merit, the first chapter will thus go over the results of the thematic analysis and discuss them in the context of van Manen's view of phenomenology. The second chapter will then examine the results of the data analysis in the light of the theoretical framework used in this thesis.

4.1. Life world

4.1.1. Lived space and time

In the participant interviews, lived space and time manifested strongly through their experiences of using different communication platforms and methods. Although these may not be traditionally understood as spaces, in the context of interpersonal communication they act as the space in which the communication takes place and shape the experiences of their users. The participants recounted their experiences with using different platforms for communication, and among the many, Wilma was clearly the one that all participants felt most comfortable with or one that they frequented the most. Several of the participants stated the convenience of Wilma to be a major reason for their positive experiences:

The boy or girl writes in the notebook and doesn't show it, and you go to work and come back and forget to check the notebook. And when you go to the school to meet the teacher, they ask why haven't you checked the notes? Well.. now when I come back from work I can just open Wilma and check. (G2)

I like in Wilma how we can contact.. you know.. the Finnish as a second language teacher or the PE teacher or the handicrafts teacher or the school nurse. Like, it's easy to reach out to them through Wilma or also to message multiple people at the same time. So I think that that communication platform's good. (G3)

[I have used it] very organically, if there was a message that should have been sent to the whole class, then I sent it through Wilma. (T2)

Common trait among the guardians was their feeling of safety regarding Wilma. The guardian 3 emphasised how the space made them feel a bit more distant from the teacher and gave them the possibility to have more agency in the communication:

I do like that there's Wilma because I know that the teacher checks it often, but there's also the safe distance for both of us to be able to answer when we want. (G3)

Similar feelings were reported by the guardian 1 in their interview:

I first thought that the teacher doesn't dare to call me, because I will immediately get stressed... Now in the lower secondary school the teacher only calls me in emergencies, and that's fine because I can understand after all. If don't understand, then I send a message on Wilma or through phone or.. But I thought that in lower secondary school they would not send messages but call straight away.. and.. I answer when I have the energy to. (G1)

Especially guardians 1 and 3 contrasted the use of Wilma heavily with phone calls, both indicating their dislike for the space utilized by phone calls. Although both indicated that they prefer the autonomy that comes with Wilma, they had very different reasons for preferring the space offered by the platform. In guardian number 1's case, the reason was likely the possible language barrier, which made them feel more comfortable engaging in platforms where there was an option of written communication. The platforms with written communication gave the guardians a chance to take their time in reading and translating the messages, giving thus a sufficient space and time for the communication to take place. With the additional time allowed for the communication, the guardians can better collect their thoughts, how to phrase them and even search for additional information to support their understanding, something that may not be possible in face-to-face communication. In guardian 3's case, the reason for the preference of Wilma took place likely due to the professional relationship between the teacher and the guardian. This aspect will be further analysed in the lived relation section.

Whereas guardians preferred Wilma as their primary space in which the communication took place, teachers preferred face-to-face interactions especially in the beginning of the school year.

It's important to me anyways that I can establish a good relationship with the guardians face-to-face. When you get a new class, it is extremely important that you get to know everyone like this, and...when you do have issues later on, it is a lot easier to handle everything when the person has a face and you have already talked about something else as well. (T1)

What I think is important are parent-teacher meetings, especially when you get new students. In my experience, once you have seen each other face-to-face, it is so much easier to communicate through Wilma or phone. Like, it's important for me to see the guardians...and have that physical contact. (T2)

The teachers felt that meeting in a physical space for the first time was important, in order to establish a good foundation for the communication to then occur also in other spaces. Usually, the face-to-face meetings took place in the classroom of the teacher, which can be seen as a quite intimate space for the teacher. Contrary to the guardians, teachers seemed to prefer a space that allows for a closer and more immediate interaction to take place, at least in the beginning.

They indicated that the closeness of physical space allowed for them to be more open and authentic, and to see the guardians as individuals as well. The physical closeness also allowed for the teachers to employ other aspects of communication, such as body language and tone.

You can see the communication as a whole, because you can also physically see the body language and the person. It's of course always less rich to communicate [online], especially when you can't express yourself to the full extent in Finnish, so in those situations the body language and appearance help. (T1)

When you have seen the teacher, and you see that they are in fact on your side.. it opens up a whole new level to the conversation. And when I get to see the guardians with their hearts open.. like this is me and this is what we are like. (T2)

Guardians did acknowledge that the face-to-face meetings had their place in the communication, especially when the discussion turned to something negative or important. However, they often had quite mixed experiences of the actual meetings and their accessibility.

We had already lived here for quite a while and we had a whole class' guardians meeting with the school. And we sat at these tables, and it was a bit strange. The principal talked first and the war had just started... and they said that we are all worried about the war and we have a student from Ukraine. And then a lady turns and stares at us, and I thought why does she look at us... like do I smile or cry.. or what.. why.. And after that I didn't want to go there anymore. (G1)

These like days where the parents come to the school and interact, oftentimes some messages that they send might be translated into English or so there will be Finnish and then English below because there are a lot of international families... So oftentimes those messages with like specific instructions about where to come and like what happens afterwards, they won't be translated... I knew that there were several like non-Finnish speaking parents who were confused after the home and school day of where to go in the school... So there is this kind of assumption that if you know, you know, and if you don't then you just don't participate. (G3)

These accounts from both the teachers and the guardians demonstrate how a space is not only a physical space with all the materialistic objects in it, but one that is also impacted by the atmosphere and the feeling of belonging. Guardian 1's feelings of not belonging were caused by the behaviour of others sharing the space with them. They also indicated, along with the teacher 1, their support for having more unofficial conversations with one another. For guardians 1 and 2 this meant that they could walk up to the classroom when picking up their son and have a casual conversation with the teacher. As for teacher 1, coming from a smaller city, the feeling of being approachable even in public was brought up.

And the teacher or someone said that we could come by the classroom... and I always peeked into the class and asked the teacher how they are doing and they told me what they had done during the day. (G1)

If you live in a small city, you are going to see the guardians in the town. And with many of them, those informal chats take the place of more official meetings. But I have always said that let me know if I talk too much and it's not the purpose to have these conversations in the store. But it is convenient. (T1)

These more casual conversations helped the different parties to build trust and get to know each other better also outside of the official correspondence of the school. The more laid-back atmosphere of unofficial meetings allowed for the conversation to be more approachable for both the guardians and the teachers.

However, the negative experiences of all guardians on official school meetings made them hesitant towards attending face-to-face meetings in the school and further solidified the preference of Wilma in their minds. For guardian 3, they experienced the space of school as inaccessible due to the language barrier experienced by non-Finnish speaking guardians. One way in which the guardian 3 felt that the space in schools could be improved was availability of translations or translators.

For first grade there were several like the parents, who weren't completely confident in Finnish so at the original parent teachers meeting there was like one parent who volunteered to translate for us, which was nice... Or for example, having the slides available through Wilma link translated so we can ...[have them] printed out and ready there on the table for a few of us parents to read, it doesn't take much to do that with the AI so.. But those little considerations could really boost the equality because we don't know as much as they do, and already we're foreigners. (G3)

The use of translators and different accommodations seemed to vary greatly across the participants and spaces. Although the accommodations are mostly language related, they are placed under the lived space and time heading, as their use impacts the users' experience of the space. The most common form of accommodation experienced by the participants was the use of English instead of Finnish, both in face-to-face meetings as well as on online platforms.

With the most resent guardians we have a Whatsapp group with all the teachers in it, and in there we communicate in English. And similarly with the guardians that I have had before, we have communicated in English. (T1)

I remember that especially guardians that have come from Africa.. I had guardians from Kongo, and their English was remarkable. Usually it has been enough to have the communication in English. (T2)

Guardians themselves were also proactive on the translation front, using AI based online translator software to translate messages from Finnish to their preferred languages. Having human translators present in the meetings seemed to vary based on where the school was located and

how well versed they were with getting accommodations to their non-Finnish speaking guardians. Teacher 2 remarked that in their experience using translators was the norm and a very easy process in the capital region of Finland, but in the more remote locations the translators were rarely used.

Maybe I have never needed them in Oulu or in here... I don't think they have ever even heard of using translators here. But in Helsinki, it is its own thing, because they already have so many families with immigrant backgrounds... But yeah, in Helsinki the services worked great. A story that I have told so many time, I had a student who needed an individualised education plan (IEP) done, and the mother did not understand that. And we went over it so many times with the mother, and I talked like a poet and the translator.. the mother sat here, the translator there, and I'm explaining to the mother with my whole body and the translator is simultaneously talking as well. And we knew with the translator that we can take this conversation to the finish line... It was a job well done from our side. (T2)

Guardian 3 had had many experiences with using translators in both the face-to-face communication as well as on online meetings. They remarked that sometimes the translators can help the teacher focus on the conversation better, as they don't have to think about translating themselves. However, they emphasised the importance of using professional or native speakers in the translations:

I've just had such bad experiences with translators, where it's easier just to pretend the translator is not there... And the translators themselves are often not... native Finnish or English speakers, and then they're translating then in a third language, and so it it...things get so confused and complicated with the translator, where I'm just like, can I retranslate what she just said. (G3)

When comparing the experiences of teacher 2 and guardian 3, it is evident how the presence of a translator impacted the space and how they experienced the situation. In the teacher's experience, the presence of a translator was integral for the space and the situation to feel like a positive and welcoming one. Had the translator not been present the space would have likely felt not welcoming and even hostile as the teacher and the mother tried to understand each other. However, the opposite can be said about the guardian 3's experience. Because of the translator not having a good grasp of the language or making a different interpretation of the message, the space felt like a battle ground where the different sides are trying to make their message come across right. The situation can be compared to that of a children's game of playing broken telephone, where the message changes as it passes from one person to another.

4.1.2. Lived relations

Language

The relationships between guardians and teachers were found to be complicated, albeit mostly positive. All participants acknowledged that the language and the possible barriers caused by it impacted the relationship that they had with the other parties of home-school cooperation.

Of course it impacts... because normally I can understand but I don't understand.. sarcasm, irony or reading between the lines. Well, some could call me dumb, but in school communication those may not be so present. The communication should be straight forward. (G1)

Well, it can impact the communication. You are not able to use as rich language as you could if you used Finnish. There may be some things that the guardians don't understand or that they misunderstand, even culturally. It hasn't happened to me, but you just can't use as varied expressions as with Finnish speaking parents. (T1)

The language impacted how the different parties interacted with one another, as already showcased in the lived space and time section, but also how they experienced the relation with one another. As one is not able to express themselves fully, they open up the relationship to possible misunderstandings and hurt feelings. From guardian 1's experience, one can observe that language is also bound to the culture in which the user has grown up in, thus jokes or other forms of more subtle communication can be hard to understand in another language. This might be a reason why teachers indicated face-to-face meetings as the preferred communication space. The visuality and closeness of the space allows the teachers to mitigate the restrictions imposed to them by the language and cultural barriers. Both teachers that were interviewed emphasised the importance of building trust with the guardians and having trust in them for conveying the correct information to the teachers.

Maybe they themselves have used a translator or something, but I haven't translated anything. When they tell me that English is enough then I believe that it is. (T1)

Other teachers still communicate with them in English, but I have written in Finnish because.. if the mother has told me that I can write in Finnish then I'll write in Finnish.. Because the guardians also need to begin to understand Finnish at some point if they are going to stay in Finland. (T2)

However, both had also experienced when the guardians had been untruthful or overestimated their language skills, which had led to issues in the wider scale of home-school cooperation.

With this new student.. it took a long time for us to figure out if they speak Ukrainian or Russian. And maybe the home had kind of kept it as a secret that they speak Russian. Like imagine, we had translated everything in the beginning to Ukrainian, and that really hurt the student's growth from the start. (T1)

I remember I had one father from Kongo, and we had to go through IEP things. And I had told the father that I can get a translator to be present in the meeting because the language is quite difficult in IEPs. But the father said that he can handle it in Finnish. And it.. it was bad... We looked at each other and we both could see that he did not understand. (T2)

Although both teachers were understanding of the guardians' situations and the reasons why they had conveyed their language skills as they had, they did report that it had impacted their relationship and perception with those guardians. Teacher 1 stated that when you do not have open lines of communication, from one side or the other, it takes away all the trust that has been built up until that point. On the other hand, guardian 3 recounted their experience of interacting with a teacher who did not have the faith in their language skills:

There have been times where I try and write the teacher in Finnish and she responds to me in English. So that's generally been our language of communication, because when I write in Finnish, she responds in English and so... when I've gone to her school with just like the parents or whatever, I try and speak Finnish and this kind of thing. But.. but the parent teacher meetings and through Wilma messages, it's in English. (G3)

Language clearly is an important part of the home-school cooperation in situations where the parties do not share a same first language. However, equally important seems to be the trust in the relationship and how open the communication lines are. Teachers 1 and 2 allowed for the guardians to have agency over their preferred language of communication, which helped them to build and nurture a healthy relationship with one another. For guardian 3, this was not the case.

Professional cooperation

When asked about the participants perception of their relationship with the other parties of home-school cooperations, the individualistic nature of the relationships became evident.

Both teachers generally indicated that their experiences had been positive with all the non-Finnish speaking guardians that they have worked with, and that they had even had positive contact with the guardians later in life.

A guardian volunteered in our school for an event, and she said that she wanted to give back to the school since everything had gone so well... [and] another guardian also reached out later on and asked how we were doing and that the time they had spent here was the best time of their lives. So really from both families I have received positive feedback later on. (T1)

For guardians, the nature of the relationship seemed to be more varied and changed from one teacher to another.

I don't want to say that I'm not happy with the current teacher, but they just are not the same as the previous teacher. But I understand that it may be more difficult for them when kids grow and are... (G1)

Well, the first one there was like not much communication at all, so it's hard to tell. She.. I think it was her first or second year teaching and the students were very young. So she was.. I think she was just all over the place and not.. not really able to, you know, engage... But with the second teacher, she was kind of like mid-career, 6 to 7 years in and yeah, I wish we could have had her longer because she was... more thoughtful, like problem solving oriented, listening to our opinions like, hearing what we thought was best for a child, wanted to know more about what goes on at home and like I thought that was a much more inclusive approach, yeah. (G3)

Especially impactful to the relationship was the teacher mannerism, which came across often in guardian 3's interview. Although the experiences that they remark on the above extract are varied, they are still mainly positive or neutral ones. However, with the most recent teacher that guardian 3 is cooperating with, the relationship seems to be more fraught. A lot of the anxiety and negativity associated with the relationship with this teacher seems to stem from their personality and style of communication, especially concerning Finnish as a second language teaching.

I didn't know that it's up to the parents, to decide so I was like, fine, if you say that no, then no, you know? But... then I realised that it was [up to me], but it was already like October. And so they said no, no this is the middle of the term. So yeah, I.. I realised that I do have to be very stubborn with it. Got a phone call from the teacher when I wrote saying that I'm.. I'm interested in my daughter being in mother tongue so she can develop those skills... So.. and then she was, she was very adamant, saying, I don't think this is good for her. I don't think this is good for the student. You know, so I felt I felt that she was very much of the strong opinion that that this is the case and it made me feel that I couldn't decide even though I.. actually have the agency to decide... With this recent teacher last three years, I felt like lower, even though I have a background in education... And I would have more knowledge than the average parent on what's going on in the education system. Yeah, I feel like... You know she's ..she has mentioned several times that she's been a teacher for like 30 years and that she's going to retire next year and she's got this experience and so... Yeah, I do not feel as an equal for sure. (G3)

Guardian 3 indicated that they preferred the communication style of the previous teacher that they had cooperated with, as the teacher presented a more calming and problem-solving approach to communication. This communication style in home-school cooperation gave the guardian a sense of agency and a more positive outlook in the relationship between the guardian and the teacher. As for the new teacher, the guardian 3 expressed them to be quite strong willed and mainly focused on the negative aspects of the student. These factors, in combination with the other aspects of home-school cooperation discussed in the previous paragraphs, destabilised the foundation of the relationship and led to negative outlooks on the cooperation.

Beyond mannerisms and communication styles, also the perception of responsibilities and support networks impacted the relationship between the guardians and teachers. All participants had a clear idea of what responsibilities belonged to them in the home-school cooperation. For guardians, the responsibilities they took on included being interested in the student's academic progress and caring for their physical health.

Well the home's responsibility.... You have to make sure they sleep enough... Last year when he had history we studied together quite a lot and he got a good grade. [In mathematics] I try to help and then we hired a Ukrainian tutor for him. (G1)

I show my daughter that I'm involved in her school. But if there's a problem, I communicate with her teacher. If there's an event, I go to it. If there is a test that.. I remind her to study, help her study. If she lets me help her study. Check her homework. Show interest, be involved. Ask her questions. If there's something that she's struggling on, I can try and help her find a different way of looking at it. (G3)

The guardians were less clear on teachers' responsibilities and thought them to be quite context specific. For example, guardian 3 emphasised that the teachers should be clear on how the home can help the students to progress or support their academic growth. This was likely due to the fact that they had not received any indication of how they could help their child move from Finnish as a second language classes to Finnish as a mother tongue classes.

As for the teachers, they had a much clearer understanding of what responsibilities they perceived to belong to them and what responsibilities belonged to homes.

Teacher should be the one to begin the cooperation and advocate the creation of good foundation for the relationship, but after that I think it should be fifty-fifty. It should be cyclical, but often it is more on the school to communicate. (T1)

We are responsible of teaching, but the home has the responsibility to take care that the learning happens also at home. So checking homework, studying for the tests, having right type of clothing and correct books, making sure that the child eats and sleeps well. We have the responsibilities that have been given to us in the Basic education act, but homes are still... it's over 50% no matter how they try to push the responsibility to schools, the main carers are the guardians. (T2)

The clear division of responsibilities on teacher's part made them more confident in how home-school cooperation and the relationship between teachers and guardians should be nurtured. As guardians were less clear on the division of responsibilities, and especially on what responsibilities the teachers had, they may be more hesitant on contacting the teacher in fear of overstepping their boundaries. The guardians interviewed for this thesis did not identify such barriers for their own cooperation, but teachers did identify them among the guardians that they work with.

I always try to say that there is no such small issue [that they can't contact me], so the issues won't grow. The contact should be made immediately. But it's also something that I also have to keep thinking, there's always more that we could do (T1)

In situations where teachers were uncertain of their responsibilities or how a situation should be handled, they often reported on relying on their co-workers for support and guidance. Even in situations where they did not directly identify the co-worker support, it was clearly present.

We have never had a situation where someone would not have known how to speak, we have only had English speakers... If we would get a Swedish speaker, like we should know how to speak it, so in those situations I would probably rely heavily on other teachers. (T1)

We have a Whatsapp group where there are the student's class teacher, other subject teachers and me as the Finnish as a second language teacher. (T2)

Guardian peer support networks were clearly rarer, whether they had no one to support them in the area or the support network had not been established.

Are you in contact with other non-Finnish speaking guardians from the school?

No, I wish. There's no group like that at. All. Yeah, at all. It would be super good, actually... We have a parents group that I'm part of, the PTA, but it's all in Finnish usually in puhekieli and it's like hard to follow. But I still .. but it's only like arranging the fundraisers like Halloween dance to raise money for the school. Or, you know, discussing, you know, things like.. basically, fundraisers and field trips. But has nothing to do with like home school collaboration or or like getting introduced into the school system. (G3)

The lack of peer support on the guardians' part may further alienate them from the home-school cooperation relationship, as they have no one to rely on. On the other hand, this may increase the importance of teacher-guardian relationship even more. However, what is clear is that in home-school cooperation the lived relations are not occurring merely between the teacher and the guardians, but also between teachers, the guardians, and the past and the present.

4.1.3. Lived body

All areas of lifeworld are closely connected and intertwined with one another. One area may impact another one, and the lived body is perhaps the one with most overlap with the other lifeworld categories. Home-school cooperation evoked many emotions and feelings in all participants, ranging from anxiety and resentment to joy and relief.

The negative emotions were evoked partly due to the uncertainty that comes with being in a new situation, in this case having to interact with a person or system that is unfamiliar and speaks a foreign language.

I found out probably the day before the school started that there was going to be a non-Finnish speaking student coming to my class. They came to get acquainted with the school, and the principal and I walked around the school with them. The nervousness passed quickly, but in the beginning it felt horrible. Like why my class? (T1)

I wasn't sure if my son could come here or not, but I dreamt about it every time when I walked by the school and heard children playing. It was so difficult and painful to get him here.... And then he came and I went to the city to tell that my son would start school... I was so happy inside, but on the other hand I was also scared about how he would do. (G1)

In both cases, the emotions soon turned to relief and fruitful experiences of teacher-guardian relationship. Teacher 2 reported that for them there had not even been an initial feeling of anxiousness, and the building of home-school cooperation with non-Finnish speaking guardians was very similar to that of any other guardian.

After the first student, it got so much easier. The first experience was so good. So when the next student came to my class and the other members of staff were anxious, I could tell them that it's not a big deal and we'll be fine. It felt so easy. (T1)

It's probably because of my personality, because I don't fear different kinds of people. When I meet them at school, I'm a professional and I treat them the same as I would any other guardian. The only difference is the language. (T2)

Guardian 3 was the only participant who indicated continued feelings of anxiety towards the home-school cooperation. However, the remarks of anxiety mostly appeared when discussing about the current teacher and school, but not of the home-school cooperation in general.

It's messed up because I keep trying to remind myself that she's trying to do the best that she can for my daughter to support her. But I can't help also feeling that some of the way she responds are based on preconceptions or assumptions of what a foreign family is like, or what the capabilities of a non-Finnish speaking child is..And I'm also like again this, this, this Finnish as a second language thing creates some anxiety for me because I'm.. I have.. I know that I have a different opinion than the teacher does about some very core issues, and it bothers me because I feel like something could be done better for my daughter, but I have to work against it so that that part is the only part that creates anxiety... the the anxiety or the discomfort comes from this differing in opinion on what's best for my child so that I don't feel I'm 100% heard on. (G3)

As can be seen from the account of guardian 3, guardians have also other aspects of life that created tension in home-school cooperation, besides the communication between school and home. For guardian 3, that tension came from not knowing if their child is being treated differently or with a prejudice, both in school and in the wider society. As for guardians 1 and 2, their first years of home-school cooperation were overwhelmed by stress and fear of deportation of their son. However, they also expressed gratitude towards the school and teachers for making the transitions easier for them and their son.

He went to school in August and in May we got a notification from the police that he has to leave. And it really was a big stress because I had to stay and he had to go. How can they do that to a family... He left for three months and then came back and went straight back to school here... And I knew that the process [of enrolling him to school] would be long... but then the principal just said that schools starts the day after tomorrow, come to the school tomorrow to look around. And it was such a surprise that they didn't need hundreds of papers or doctor's certificate, and he can just go. (G1)

The lifeworld categories provide a good foundation for understanding the different aspects of home-school cooperation and the intricate details impacting it. In the next chapter, the findings of the study will be interpreted in the light of previous research and the research questions posed in the beginning of this thesis will be answered.

4.2. Interpretation of the findings

The first research question of the thesis was: *How is the home-school cooperation organised when the guardians do not speak Finnish fluently and which practices have or have not worked?* To answer these questions, the findings will be analysed in the light of the theoretical background of this thesis, beginning with Joyce Epstein's (1995) model for home-school cooperation.

All participants indicated communication to be their main focus in home-school cooperation, and the one dimension that they felt the most knowledgeable about. The communication theme in the data analysis section reflects four different dimensions of Epstein's (1995) model; communication, parenting and learning at home. The communication in Epstein's (1995) model refers to the methods of communication that are established to share information between different parties. Participants indicated a varied use of different communication platforms ranging from face-to-face meetings to online platforms. Teachers were the ones who dictated which platforms were used, and as such the practices changed from one teacher to another. However, the tried-and-true methods of face-to-face communication and the school wide online platform, Wilma, were found to be the most effective in home-school communication with the non-Finnish speaking guardians by the teachers. In addition to these more official communication platforms, the use of Whatsapp or text messages were utilized for more quick paced communication between different parties. As for guardians, their communication preferences mirrored those of teachers, except when it came to phone calls. Teacher indicated neutrality towards phone calls, but guardians experienced them to be their least preferred communication platform due to possible language barriers and timing concerns.

The other dimensions of Epstein's (1995) model related to communication were less visible. Parenting advice only came up in the context of guardian's decisions regarding the students' educational choices, such as the need to establish an individualised education plan or having the student study Finnish as a second language. Other forms of parenting, such as nutrition or sleep were only mentioned in passing, with no clarification as to whether these responsibilities are communicated to the guardians explicitly. Learning at home was more heavily discussed, as both the teachers and guardians named it as a responsibility of the home in home-school cooperation. In guardian 3's case there had not been clear communication from the school to help them support the student at home with their Finnish as a second language classes, whereas guardians 1 and 2 had resorted to hiring private tutors for their child in order to support their learning at home. Teachers on the other hand mainly referred to this responsibility when discussing about checking or doing homework with the students, and both teachers 1 and 2 were encouraging and reminding guardians to check their students' homework. Based on these participant accounts, it seems that although schools are communicating responsibilities of home to the guardians in some manner, there is not a clear instruction given on how the guardians can support their students at home. This is especially impactful with non-Finnish speaking guardians, as they may not be familiar with the expectations and support offered by the Finnish school system.

The previous research done on home school cooperation in Finland has indicated that Epstein's (1995) other dimensions are not always present at schools (Sormunen et al., 2011). The research on the impact of diversity on home-school cooperation has also indicated that especially guardians who do not speak the majority language of the school may be less likely to participate on these dimensions or show their participation in a different manner (Schneider & Arnot, 2018). From the interviews, the only dimension that did not appear was the collaboration with community. Granted, the interviews mostly focused on the communication between guardians and teachers, which may be the reason why this dimension was not recorded. Surprisingly, volunteering which has also been found to be a dimension that guardians rarely utilize (Sormunen et al., 2011), was strongly represented in the participant experiences. For guardian 1, they volunteered to help with various tasks at school, including translation help. All guardians participated actively in the different events and performances organised by the school. This was especially visible in guardian 3's case, as they also were part of the PTA, which was in charge of organising different volunteer events. Being part of the PTA committee also fulfilled Epstein's (1995) final dimension, decision making, although in guardian 3's experience the work of PTA was

mostly focused on volunteering. However, as previous studies in the Finnish context have often focused on Finnish teacher-guardian interactions, it is possible that the cultural background of the guardians in this thesis has impacted the extend of volunteering with schools. If the guardians are used to volunteering in schools in their countries of origin, it is possible that those habits and preferences have transferred over to the Finnish school system.

Based on these findings, home-school cooperation with non-Finnish speaking guardians seems to follow similar trends found in previous research done in Finland. As per previous research, home-school cooperation is mainly focused on communication between different participants, and most communication is done through Wilma (Alanko, 2018; Sormunen et al., 2011). The findings of this study were similar, although communication preferences varied based on the participants previous experiences and their expectations of communication. None of the participants identified communication platforms that had not worked at all, but preferred Wilma, or in teachers' case, face-to-face communication. However, communication practices are also closely linked to participants' interpersonal experiences which leads us to examine the second research question: *How do guardians and teachers experience home-school cooperation?*

Overall, the participants indicated a positive attitude towards home-school cooperation and the importance of it, which is in line with the previous studies conducted in Finland (Sormunen et al., 2011, 2018). For guardians, the teachers' communication styles and manners seemed to play an important role in how they experienced home-school cooperation. Guardians appreciated having both structured and unplanned conversations, with the structured conversations mainly used in parent-teacher conferences or in day-to-day communication through the schools' online platform. The structured conversations were commanding in nature, meaning that they were used to transfer knowledge from one participant to another in order to understand the student's situation better. The unplanned conversations took place in the school grounds but also occasionally outside of them. Although the unplanned conversations often included conversation about students and their progress, they were also used as relational communication device to improve the relationship between guardians and teachers. Both teachers and guardians emphasised the importance of building a relationship through relational communication, as this can help with the structural communication and conflict resolution later on.

Previous research (Alanko, 2018; Dor, 2012) has also found that teachers do not often get training on home-school cooperation and the laws and guidelines surrounding it. The loose

regulations and the lack of uniformed training give a lot of autonomy for the teachers to conduct the cooperation in a manner in which they prefer. The varied practices were also visible in the experiences of the participants in this study, which each recounting a slightly different version of how home-school cooperation is organised. Besides practices, also teachers' professional communication was marked on, with different experiences of communication hierarchy associated with different teachers. Guardian 3 emphasises how the teacher they are currently cooperating with often makes them feel less than, whereas with previous teachers they have felt more equal in terms of agency. When contrasting guardian 3's experiences to the institutional hierarchy model presented by Bijnen (2019), it is clear that the teacher in this situation is abusing their power and has failed to nurture the relational communication with the guardian. The teacher assumes a position of authority by referring to their senior position and education, compared to the guardian. With the position of authority, the teacher is able to limit the conversation and acceptable solutions to ones they see as fitting. On the other hand, when analysing the experiences of other guardians, and other teachers that the guardian 3 has cooperated with, the experiences seem to be mostly positive and equal.

In general, it seems that teachers are able to conduct home-school cooperation in a professional manner, where open communication, trust, and each participants' expertise are appreciated. Although teachers may not be familiar with intercultural competences, they seem to navigate the diverse home-school cooperation situations relatively well and possess many of the traits presented by Imsa-Ard (2023). Traits such as respect, open-mindedness and curiosity were present in both teacher interviews, and even teacher 1, who professed to feeling dread when first encountering a non-Finnish speaking guardians and students, expressed positive emotions towards diverse home-school cooperation situations.

5. Limitations and ethical considerations

This section of the thesis will give an overview of possible limitations and ethical considerations when conducting a study with the lens of hermeneutical phenomenology. The chapter begins with a look into the possible ethical issues faced in the study, and then moves on to the limitations and possible solutions.

As the research for this thesis was conducted with interviews, one of the possible major ethical issues is the gaining of informed consent and maintaining participant privacy. As such, the participants were given an opportunity to familiarise themselves with the method and topic of the study prior to beginning the interviews. During this time, participants were informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any point, how the data would be stored, and their anonymity maintained. Participants were also informed of the gathering of their linguistic and ethnic backgrounds, and their right to not share that information if they so choose. If participants had any questions or concerns, those were also discussed prior to signing the informed consent form. During the transcription process, any identifiable information was taken out or changed in order to maintain privacy of the participants and those who were discussed during the interviews. No names were used in the transcription process, and the data files were labelled with numbers to further ensure anonymity. The files were stored securely in the university server, where I was the only person to access them. The data is only stored until the publication of this thesis, after which all notes and interview files will be deleted.

As for the limitations of the study, the biggest consideration is the sample size of the study. The study had five participants in total, two teachers and three guardians. Due to the small sample size, the results of the study are not generalisable to be a representation of the larger society. However, the aim of the phenomenological study is not necessarily to produce generalisable information but rather highlight the individualistic experiences of people and examine the essence of the phenomenon as revealed by those experiences (Finlay, 2012; van Manen, 2017). The study succeeded in this by examining and bringing forth the unique experiences of the participants and making connections between different experiences. In addition, the inclusion of both teachers and guardians allowed for a deeper understanding of the phenomenon, with the analysis conducted in this thesis providing a well-balanced outlook into the world of home-school cooperation from the points of view of teachers and guardians.

Another possible limitation of the study was the use of phenomenology. As there is no one standard way in which phenomenological research should be conducted, the research can lack

validity in its approach to the data. I attempted to mitigate this risk by providing an in-depth look into the different approaches within phenomenology, what approach I have used in this thesis, and how that has guided the interview and data analysis process. By doing so, I hope that the readers will have a good understanding of what was the reasoning behind my choice of hermeneutic phenomenology and why it suited my research. An important part of phenomenological research is also the objectivity of the researcher. During the research process, I attempted to bracket away my pre-existing assumptions and remain open-minded. The research questions were formatted as neutrally as possible, to allow for the participants to bring forth their true experiences without any interference. Similarly, in the data analysis section, the interviews were first analysed with an inductive outlook and only after that examined against the existing research on the topic. This allowed for the data to speak for itself, without the interference of theoretical frameworks. However, at the same time, qualitative research relies heavily on theoretical frameworks to increase the validity of the research, meaning that complete objectivity is not possible. Due to this, theoretical framework was not left out of this thesis either, but rather it was approached differently to protect both the validity and the phenomenological mindset in the study.

6. Discussion and conclusion

This study has used hermeneutic phenomenology as a way to highlight the unique experiences of teachers and non-Finnish speaking guardians on home-school cooperation. The aim was to gain insight into how home-school cooperation is conducted with linguistically diverse guardians and what practices both teacher and guardians have found to be accessible. In addition, the analysis examined the personal and interpersonal experiences of participants involved in home-school cooperation.

The interviews revealed that participants felt most comfortable with using the schools' online platform, Wilma. The platform provided a safe and convenient way for the participants to conduct home-school cooperation, in a space that provided an appropriate amount of distance for the interpersonal communication to occur without infringing on participant agency. Teachers also emphasised the use of face-to-face communication, in order to establish a personal relationship with the guardians from day one. Although no method of communication was seen as not working, phone calls produced the most hesitant or negative answers from guardians, as the possible language barrier could hinder the communication, and the choice for timing one's answer was taken away.

All in all, communication methods remained largely the same whether the cooperation took place with Finnish speaking or non-Finnish speaking guardians. Interestingly, the use of accommodations was quite minimal, mostly appearing in the form of having the conversations occur in English. Compared to the news article by Okko (2023), that led to the writing of this thesis, teachers seemed quite happy and even eager to offer communication possibilities in English. Schools clearly have varying policies on how home-school cooperation should be organised and what accommodations can be offered when the guardians do not speak Finnish. This places both the guardians and the teachers into an uncomfortable situation, as they do not have clear guidelines or regulations to follow. For guardians, it can be difficult to ask or obtain accommodations, as each school follows their own policies. Similarly, teacher may struggle with finding or declining different forms of accommodations requested and needed by guardians. To avoid or at least mitigate these issues, teachers should be offered either preservice or professional development courses, where discussions and practical guidance is given on how to encounter linguistically and culturally diverse guardians. These courses may help teachers to be better prepared, both mentally and practically, to cooperate with diverse guardians, and to develop their home-school cooperation practices to be more inclusive and equal.

Despite some negative experiences on guardians' part, all participants recognised the importance of home-school cooperation and expressed generally positive feelings towards it. Participants' experiences were impacted by power imbalances, trust, and teacher mannerisms. In situations where the power dynamics were equal, participants had established trust with one another, and the communication style was open and respecting, the cooperation seemed to produce more positive results for both the teachers and guardians. If one or more of these aspects was neglected, the perceived success of cooperation was more negative. This indicates that in addition to the tangible measurements of success in home-school cooperation, such as an increase in academic performance, interpersonal relations contribute a great deal to the feelings of successful home-school cooperation on both teachers' and guardians' part.

As the sample size of this study is quite small and does not offer generalisable results in a larger scale, future research should be conducted on accommodation practices and their impact on home-school cooperation in a larger scale. This would offer better understanding on other possible factors impacting home-school cooperation, besides the ones brought up in this thesis. In addition, future education policies and guidelines should be produced on the topic, to offer guidelines for both teachers and guardians on what their rights are and how to obtain different forms of accommodations. This would help schools to offer more standardized practices and help teachers prepare for situations where the guardians have a diverse linguistic background.

Based on the results of this study, it is important to understand each teacher-guardian relationship as an individualistic relationship, which is impacted by various factors. Although the guardians and teachers preferred to use Wilma or face-to-face communication and had generally quite positive experiences of home-school cooperation, communication methods, accommodations, and the ways in which interpersonal relationships are nurtured should be decided on a guardian-by-guardian basis. A method that suits one teacher and guardian may not suit another one.

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Appendix A. Interview structure for guardians

Personal information of the interviewee

- Where are you from?
- What languages do you speak?
- Have your children attended school in another country?
 - o Where?
 - o Return to this question later if applicable.

Experiences of Finnish education system

- What have your experiences been interacting with the Finnish education system through your children?
- How has the communication been organised?
 - o Emails
 - o Phone calls
 - o Wilma
 - o Parent-teacher conferences
 - o Other forms of communication
- Can you give me an example of how the cooperation has been organised?
- How do these practices compare to other education systems and their communication cultures your child has been a part of?
 - o Methods
 - o Frequency
 - o Detail
 - o Manner of communication; non-verbal cues, tones, gestures, attitudes
- Is there a certain form of communication that you prefer or you think has worked well?
 - o In the Finnish system → Why? How did you feel in that situation?
 - *focus on experience not opinion
 - o In another system → Why? How did you feel in that situation?
 - *Focus on experience not opinion
- Is there a certain form of communication that you dislike or that has not worked well?
 - o In the Finnish system → Why? How did you feel in that situation?
 - o In another system → Why? How did you feel in that situation?
- Does language impact the communication?
 - o Frequency
 - o Detail
 - o Unsuitable methods
 - o Approaching the school with questions → what emotions are involved?
- What have your experiences been like with getting accommodations to home-school cooperation?
 - o Translators present in meetings

- AI translator
- Messages sent in English/other language/ simple Finnish
- If accommodation were provided, how did they make you feel in those situations?
- What has your experience with the teacher(s) been like?
- What do you think could be done to improve the cooperation?
- Return to previous experience of the cooperation, how did you feel in that situation?
 - Space and time
 - Body; emotions, sweating...
 - Relations to other participants
- What do you think are the responsibilities of different parties in the home-school cooperation, from your experience?
 - Guardians
 - Teachers
- Would you like to add something?

Appendix B. Interview structure for teachers

Personal information of the interviewee

- How long have you worked as a teacher?
- How many students have you taught that have linguistically diverse families?
- What languages do you speak?

Experiences of working with linguistically diverse homes

- What communication methods have you used when guardians do not speak Finnish?
 - o Email
 - o Phone calls
 - o Wilma
 - o Parent-teacher conferences
 - o Other
- Can you give an example of a cooperation situation where the guardians have not spoken Finnish?
- Does the guardians' language impact home-school cooperation in some way?
 - o Communication methods
 - o Frequency of communication
 - o Detail of communication
 - o Manner of communication; nonverbal, tone, gestures, attitudes...
- What is it like to use accommodations in home-school cooperation?
 - o Translator
 - o AI translator
 - o Sending messages in English/other language/ in simple Finnish?
 - o How did you experience those situations?
- What communication method has worked well?
 - o Why? How did you feel in that situation?
- What communication method has not worked well?
 - o Why? How did you feel in that situation?
- Do your colleagues support you in home-school cooperation, when the guardians do not speak Finnish?
- What has your experience been like with the guardians, who don't speak Finnish?
- How could the home-school cooperation be improved in a situation where the guardians do not speak Finnish?
- Return to previous example, how did you experience that situation?
 - o Space and time
 - o Body; emotions, sweating...
 - o Relationship with other participants
- From your opinion and experience, what are the roles of participants in the home-school cooperation?

- Teachers
 - Guardian
- Would you like to add something?