

Teachers' reflections on cultural diversity and language awareness in English language teaching

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Master's Thesis

English Philology

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Spring 2016

Table of contents

1. Introduction.....	1
2. Theoretical background.....	3
2.1 Some notions about the Finnish school system and the national curriculum	3
2.2 Status of English in the world today	6
2.2.1 How the current status of English in the world is reflected in teaching	8
2.3 Intercultural competence	10
2.4 Ecological theory	17
2.5 Language awareness	18
2.6 Teaching materials in English education	24
3. Data and methodology.....	28
4. Analysis.....	31
4.1 Varieties of English and intercultural competence	31
4.2 English-language contents and operating environments.....	37
4.3 Regularities in the English language	41
5. Discussion	44
6. Conclusion	46
7. References.....	48

1. Introduction

This study is focused on the new national curriculum for the Finnish comprehensive education and, specifically, it aims to discover how teachers interpret and implement its learning goal *The growth to cultural diversity and language awareness* (Kasvu kulttuuriseen moninaisuuteen ja kielitietoisuuteen) in English language teaching. The theoretical framework of this paper starts by introducing the Finnish school system and the general guidelines of the national curriculum and then proceeds to discuss the aforementioned goal and how it is connected to the World Englishes approach, intercultural competence, ecological theory, language awareness, and teaching materials. In the analysis, two teachers' interpretations and possible practical implementations of this goal are presented and analyzed.

The topic of this paper is timely as the new national curriculum for the Finnish comprehensive education was compiled at the end of year 2014 and it will be implemented in schools starting in August 2016. Therefore, it is worthwhile at this moment to explore what the document dictates specifically about certain learning objectives in English language teaching and how those objectives can be interpreted and implemented by English teachers. This viewpoint can help understand how teachers view concepts mentioned in the national curriculum, such as language awareness and intercultural competence. The study can also be of use to teachers wishing to learn more about the curriculum and about ways of implementing it in practice.

As cultural diversity and language awareness are a vital part of the curriculum's values and goals on the whole, this paper looks into how the cultural and language awareness aspect is confronted in English language teaching in the curriculum. This goal is one of the five learning objectives in English teaching for pupils in grades 7-9. The learning goal that this study is based on concerns cultural diversity and language awareness, and it has three subgoals, the first one concerning varieties of English and intercultural competence, the second one English-language contents and operating environments, and the third one regularities in the English language and the usage of

concepts of linguistics. The Theoretical Background of this paper delves into the conceptual framework of this goal, touching upon the role of teaching materials as well.

A group interview was arranged to gather in-depth data about the topic from two teachers. Specifically, the teachers discussed how they interpret this goal of the curriculum and how they would implement it in practice. The form of collecting data from the two teachers enabled free discussion between them so that they could analyze the subject in an in-depth way. The participants had long careers in teaching, and therefore had experience of implementing national curriculums in practice. This was visible in how they were able to compare the ideals of this curriculum to previous trends in teaching.

2. Theoretical background

In the theoretical background of this study, the Finnish school system and the national curriculum are first discussed briefly. Secondly, the conceptual framework of the curriculum's learning goal "Growth to cultural diversity and language awareness" is inspected. Specifically, the World Englishes approach, intercultural competence, ecological theory, and language awareness are seen to be linked to this goal. Lastly, the role of teaching materials in language teaching is discussed.

2.1 Some notions about the Finnish school system and the national curriculum

In this section, the Finnish school system will be briefly discussed, after which the national curriculum will be described and explained. As it will be shown, appreciating cultural diversity and language awareness is a significant part of the curriculum's underlying values, goals and operating environment, which is the reason why this thesis focuses on these particular aspects in the goals of English education. The curriculum document is in Finnish and there is no English translation available, so I will translate citations into English.

This study is focused on the part of the national curriculum which is aimed at the Finnish secondary school (yläkoulu). The basic education, or the comprehensive school is for pupils aged 7-15, and the secondary school is the latter part of it, for pupils aged 13-15, consisting of three grades, 7-9. In this paper, the learning goals of secondary school are examined because it is the last stage where the whole age group is educated in the same manner. After this it is possible to attend upper secondary school (lukio) to study academic subjects or to go to a vocational school. English studies are often begun at the age of 9, in the 3rd grade, at the lower level of the comprehensive school, and continued until the 9th grade at the end of the upper level of

comprehensive school. A part of the students continues studying English at the upper secondary school, the curriculum of which (2003) has five mandatory courses (p. 103).

The website OPS 2016 (<http://www.oph.fi/ops2016>), administered by The National Board of Education, offers information about the curriculum reform which concerns comprehensive education, preschool education and additional education in Finland. According to the website, The National Board of Education has approved the foundations of the curriculum of preschool education, comprehensive education and additional education 12/22/2014. This means the national curriculum which concerns whole Finland, and individual municipalities and schools will base their own curricula on this. These local curricula and the national curriculum will be need to be compiled by August 2016, as it is the time when instruction will first start to be given according to the new national curriculum and the new local curricula. The adjustment to the new curriculum will happen gradually during the years 2016–2019.

The national curriculum of the basic education describes itself as a document which is based on the law and the decree concerning comprehensive education, and on a decree of the Council of State adjusting the goals [of learning] and the distribution of teaching hours (p. 9). Its function is to direct teaching and to ensure that all students equally receive basic education (p. 9). Teaching in basic education must be founded on a shared ground of values and view of teaching (p. 14). These shared values are, first, the uniqueness of the pupil and his or her right to good teaching; second, humanity, education, equality and democracy; third, cultural diversity as an advantage; and fourth, the necessity of sustainable development (p. 16).

The objectives of the comprehensive education include the growth to humanity and the citizenship of society, acquiring necessary knowledge and skills, and promoting education, equality and life-long learning. The objectives are further elaborated into seven goals that encompass all school subjects, named wide-ranging goals (*laaja-alaiset tavoitteet*), which contain learning skills, cultural interaction, life skills, literary and media skills, ICT skills, work life skills, and participating and building sustainable development (p. 24). More specifically, the second of these is called cultural knowledge, interaction and expression W2 (*Kulttuurinen osaaminen, vuorovaikutus ja*

ilmaisu L2) (p. 21). The premise of this goal is that "[t]he pupils are growing up in a world which is culturally, linguistically, religiously and ethically diverse" ("Oppilaat kasvavat maailmaan, joka on kulttuurillisesti, kielellisesti, uskonnollisesti ja katsomuksellisesti moninainen.") (p. 21). As a result, the pupils need to have knowledge about their own culture and roots, as well as about other cultures, which they need to learn to respect. Human rights, especially children's rights, are an important baseline in evaluating whether encountered issues are acceptable. Furthermore, this goal includes learning to interact and to express oneself, in the student's mother tongue as well as in other languages. Pupils learn how to act in culturally different situations. (p. 21)

In the curriculum, an operating culture (toimintakulttuuri) is defined as the practices of a community. The comprehensive education in Finland has its own operating culture, and the curriculum instructs that all the members of the community should be able to freely discuss to develop the operating culture. Seven principles for developing the operating culture are listed, amongst them Interaction and versatile working (Vuorovaikutus ja monipuolinen työskentely), Cultural diversity and language awareness (Kulttuurinen moninaisuus ja kielitietoisuus), and Responsibility about the environment and orientation towards a sustainable future (Vastuu ympäristöstä ja kestävään tulevaisuuteen suuntautuminen) (p. 29). The principle Cultural diversity and language awareness states that many different identities, languages and religions exist side by side in schools, and the community respects and utilizes this variety. Language awareness needs to be taken into account in that multilingualism is appreciated, attitudes towards languages are discussed, and the significance of language in learning, interaction and the building of identities is understood (p. 28).

In the national curriculum of comprehensive education, in the section 15.4.3 Foreign languages (Vieraat kielet), the five learning goals in English education in the grades 7-9 are listed: 1. The growth to cultural diversity and language awareness; 2. Language studying skills; 3. Developing language skills, the skill to communicate; 4. Developing language skills, the skill to interpret texts; and 5. Developing language skills, the skill to produce texts (p. 349). I am going to concentrate on the first goal listed: "The growth to cultural diversity and language awareness" (Kasvu kulttuuriseen moninaisuuteen ja kielitietoisuuteen), and the three subgroups under it (p. 400).

Firstly, this goal promotes the pupil's skill to reflect on the phenomena and values related to the status of English and its variants, and prepares the pupil to develop his or her intercultural competence. Secondly, it encourages the pupil to find interesting content and operational environments in English, which expand the pupil's conception of the globalizing world and of the possibilities in operating in it. Thirdly, it directs the pupil to discover the regularities in English, to compare it to other languages and to use linguistic concepts to support learning.

Finally, it can be concluded that cultural diversity and language awareness are a vital part of this curriculum, as cultural knowledge and diversity is one of the four underlying values behind all teaching. It is also one of the seven wide-ranging goals which need to be pursued in the teaching of all school subjects, and cultural diversity and language awareness is one of the seven principles of developing schools' operating cultures. Specifically, in the English education of *yläkoulu*, cultural diversity and language awareness is one of the five learning goals. These matters suggest that the writers of the national curriculum wished to stress the importance of these subjects, and that they are worth studying more closely. This thesis will, therefore, focus on these aspects.

2.2 Status of English in the world today

This study is concentrated on the learning goal *The growth to cultural diversity and language awareness*, which is further divided into three goals. The first of them, G1, includes promoting the pupil's skill to reflect on the phenomena and values related to the status of English and its variants.

The growth to cultural diversity and language awareness
G1 to promote the pupil's skill to reflect on the phenomena and values related the status and varieties of English and to prepare the pupil to develop their intercultural competence

To be able to consider this part of the curriculum, it needs to be questioned what the status of English and its varieties is today.

Seargeant (2012) discusses in his article how Englishes in the world are studied today, examining, for example, publishing history and research. According to his definition of a discipline, 'World Englishes' is a discipline of its own, firstly because many courses and degrees are offered about it in universities around the world (p. 120). Also, many publications and organizations related to it exist these days (p. 121), which further strengthen the discipline's equity in "teaching resources and education structure" (p. 120). Furthermore, as to the history of 'World Englishes', it has developed from many approaches, some of them linguistic, some, for example, political (p. 121). Moreover, the field does not have a single methodology, but all of its methodologies serve to the same purpose: "to problematize the notion of a monolithic English and to investigate the social and political implications of the spread of the language around the world" (p. 123). However, in the globalizing world it is not easy to define which phenomena exactly can be considered as varieties of English, and this is a part of the discipline's nature (p. 125). 'World Englishes' has an established vocabulary, which facilitates discussing phenomena within it (p. 125). According to Seargeant, one implication of the legitimization of 'World Englishes' as a discipline is that through the education system, also diverse varieties of English will be legitimized (127).

Maier, Siemund and Davydova present the current distribution of English in the world in their book (2012). They attribute the spread of English to colonization practiced by Great Britain and to the powerful economic position of the US in the 20th century. They demonstrate Kachru's (1982) concentric circles of English: the inner circle includes the countries where English has traditionally been the most important language, such as the USA and the UK. The outer circle means societies like India where English is in a second language position in a multilingual setting. (p. 14) Furthermore, the expanding circle includes, for example, Poland and China, countries where English is viewed as an important international language, but where colonization has not taken place, and where English is not used administratively (p. 15). However, this model is criticized by, for example, Canagarajah (2013) for several reasons, amongst them that varieties such as Indian English are no longer valid only in their own countries, but also inner circle and other speakers need to at least understand it for business purposes (p. 4). Also, expanding circle countries are beginning to use English in their own terms for their own purposes and as a lingua franca. (p. 5.)

Seidlhofer, Crystal and Facchinetti also discuss the development and status of English from a point of view which differs from Kachru's model: in their volume they explain that the English language is in the two-way process of localization and internationalization because it is spoken worldwide (2010). In his article in this volume, Crystal (2010) explains that as English has spread to new countries, it has started localizing: people discuss matters related to their living environments when using English as an international language. They include, for example, local place names and culturally bound jokes in their English speech, which make it nonunderstandable for a speaker of another variety of English (p. 19). Varieties of English involve local cultural contents as well, not only the local accent and interference from the grammar of the speaker's native language (p. 21). Furthermore, Seidlhofer (2010) discusses the process of internationalization as the emergence of a new language: English as an International Language or English as a Lingua Franca, that is used to communicate internationally and which includes speakers from all the concentric circles (p. 151). According to her, English as a Lingua Franca cannot be classified as a variety, as it is a completely new kind of a phenomenon, and that the concept of different varieties of English spoken in certain communities is dated (p. 153).

As it was discussed here, the status of English and its variants is complex today. A 'World Englishes' approach has emerged, challenging the traditional view of English as a monolithic language. The concentric circles symbolize the different ways that English has spread around the world, including via colonization. Another way to view the process is that English is becoming localized in its various speaking environments, and that at the same time, it is becoming a lingua franca, used in the communication of speakers from different backgrounds. As the curriculum challenges the teachers and pupils to consider the status and variants of English, these are among the matters that need to be taken into account in teaching.

2.2.1 How the current status of English in the world is reflected in teaching

According to Mansfield and Poppi (2012), the current status of English as a lingua franca should be addressed in English language teaching, and the authors propose one way of handling this subject

in classrooms: studying and doing activities on Chinese English news texts, collected in a corpus. Mansfield and Poppi discuss that as the position of English in the world has changed, teachers should ensure that students learn to understand different kinds of accents and to communicate so that others understand them. Furthermore, the students need to be exposed to the reality of how extensively English is used in the world by non-natives. The authors also consider that it may be needless to expect that non-natives learn to speak English like natives as they have different needs, for example communicating with other non-native English speakers in their future careers. “Non-native speakers have to be intelligible to other non-native speakers as most of them will never communicate with a native speaker of English. As a consequence, it will be the task of EFL teachers to help their students develop common pragmatic strategies of achieving reciprocal understanding” (p. 163).

Mansfield and Poppi name the act of teaching students about different native and non-native Englishes “awareness raising” (p. 163). The word ‘awareness’ is also used in the curriculum text in the name of the goal studied in this paper “The growth to cultural diversity and language awareness”. The first part of G1, “to promote the pupil’s skill to reflect on the phenomena and values related to the status and variants of English” seems to relate directly to the kind of awareness raising and exposing to Englishes discussed in Mansfield and Poppi’s article. The question is, are all teachers in Finland aware of the changes that the status of English is going through, and will this text in the curriculum really convey the meaning of exposing students to different Englishes, also non-native ones? This paper seeks to find some answers to these questions via the group interview of two teachers.

Canagarajah (2013) explains further what kinds of demands the current status of English poses to language skills. According to Canagarajah, a speaker of English needs to have negotiation skills to be able to communicate in English with speakers from very different backgrounds, speaking different varieties. These negotiation skills include “dialect differentiation, code-switching, style shifting, interpersonal communication, conversation management, and discourse strategies” (pp.6-7). Burns (2013) also lists her propositions of the things that teachers should pay attention to in relation to English as an International Language. She mentions open discussion with students

about topics such as different terms including English as an International Language and English as a Lingua Franca, about multi/plurilingualism, international communication, and the teacher's own language learning experiences and language strategies. She also remarks exposing the students to different Englishes and evaluating the curriculum and the teaching materials, and possibly supplementing them to local needs.

All in all, scholars around the world are demanding, in unison with our curriculum, that English teaching must take into account the status of English today. According to Mansfield and Poppi, as well as Canagarajah and Burns, this means abandoning previous idealization of the native speaker model and promoting English as an International Language and English as a Lingua Franca to students. The curriculum's implicit text about language awareness, status and variants of English can be interpreted to refer to this ongoing discussion. Although the curriculum does not suggest tangible examples of how to tackle this issue in class, the writers cited previously do. Proposed ideas include teaching negotiation skills such as dialect differentiation, code-switching and conversation management, discussing openly about subjects such as English as an International Language and English as a Foreign Language, international communication and the teacher's own language strategies, and exposing the students to different Englishes via the media and by self-made corpora, and finally evaluating the curriculum and the teaching materials to see if they treat the matter sufficiently or not.

2.3 Intercultural competence

In this section, I will establish a view of intercultural competence and of its teaching, as the term is not defined in the core curriculum (2014) and practical ideas of how to teach it are not given. In the core curriculum (2014), helping pupils develop their intercultural competence is a part of the five goals of English teaching in grades 7-9. Namely, it is a part of the first goal 'The growth to cultural diversity and language awareness', and, more precisely, a part of its subgoal G1: "G1 to promote the pupil's skill to reflect on the phenomena and values related to the status and variants of English and to prepare the pupil to develop their intercultural competence" (p. 349). *Kulttuurienvälinen* means 'intercultural', and *toimintakyky* means 'ability to function' (MOT

Dictionary, n.d.), so combined together the concept could mean 'ability to function interculturally' or 'intercultural competence'. In this thesis, the Finnish term *kulttuurienvälinen toimintakyky* is understood as referring to the generally known English term 'intercultural competence'.

Harden and Witte (2011) define 'interculturality' as something that is happening in a "third space" between two existing cultures, and 'competence' as abilities and skills, or more broadly as, for example, characteristics and conventions (pp. 2-8). Similarly, according to Risager (2005), "intercultural competence involves knowledge, skills and attitudes at the interface between several cultural areas including the students' own country and a target language country" (p. 8). She further explains that "[t]he development of intercultural competence is thus seen as a process that includes the students' experiences and competencies from their own cultural backgrounds, a process that allows them to reflect on their own cultural assumptions as an integral part of the further development of their skills and knowledge of the world" (p. 8). Intercultural competence in language teaching can, therefore, be defined as something that happens at the confluence of the students' own culture and the target language culture. During the process of acquiring knowledge, skills and attitudes that are an integral part of intercultural competence, students not only learn about the target culture, but they also continuously reflect back on their own culture.

Byram is one of the most often cited scholars who have written about intercultural competence. His 1997 book on intercultural competence lists the four main elements of intercultural competence: (1) attitudes, (2) knowledge, (3), skills of interpreting and relating, and (4) skills of discovery and interaction (p. 33). Specifically, (1) attitudes connected to intercultural competence are curiosity and openness, as such attitudes enable better communication than simply positive or negative prejudice. A learner also needs to be able to 'decenter': to relativize one's own beliefs and experiences and to value those of another person (pp. 34-35). Moreover, (2) knowledge refers to knowing, firstly, about social groups in one's own and in the other's country and, secondly, of interaction in general. Individuals always have some level of knowledge of the type mentioned firstly, through primary and secondary socialization, with some of it being conscious and some unconscious. This is knowledge about identities, about belonging to different social groups, and about how social groups mark their boundaries. The kind of knowledge mentioned secondly must

be taught explicitly: it is knowledge about how identities are formed and how that effects seeing members of other groups (pp. 35-37).

The third element, (3) the skills of interpreting and relating are needed when encountering new things in the target culture and reflecting on what their equivalent would be in one's own culture. This is based on applying previously, explicitly acquired knowledge in a new situation (p. 37). Of the fourth element, (4) the skill of discovery is needed when encountering new things without previous knowledge. It is "the ability to recognize significant phenomena in a foreign environment and to elicit their meanings and connotations, and their relationship to other phenomena" (1997, p. 38). As for the skill of interaction, it comes into use when balancing intercultural knowledge, attitudes and skills in communication. It is trying to work on social relationships while solving dysfunctions that occur in communication (pp. 37-38). According to Byram, these four elements may not, however, suffice to prevent having feelings of rejection when encountering new phenomena in a target culture. Therefore, it is important to have critical cultural awareness, which means being conscious of one's own values, and thus being able to reflect how one's own values affect the ways in which one sees the other culture (p. 46). Byram states that although students should be encouraged to relativize their values, one value should be shared in all language teaching: the recognition of human rights, which can be used for evaluating new things in a non-emotional way. Political education should also be incorporated into language teaching so that learning intercultural competence would lead to the learner being able to view his or her own society via a critical lens (p. 44-45).

Furthermore, according to Witte (2011), a developmental-constructionist approach needs to be taken in developing intercultural competence. This means proceeding in a progressive, structured, experimental and individual way in familiarizing with language and culture. Experimental teaching includes "role play, group work, tandem work, simulation games, project work, virtual classrooms and critical incidents" (p. 97). The developmental-constructionist approach, emphasizing the diversity, contradictions, and change within cultures, replaces the 'culturalist' approach which often reduces a culture to generalizations and clichés. This is in line with what Byram (1997) writes about the importance of knowing about the many social groups existing in the target language

country, not only about the most privileged group. Witte (2011) argues that acquiring intercultural competence is, instead of a product, a process, possibly a life-long one, which is highly subjective and demands willingness from the learner to acquire it. (p. 101, p. 103-105). Also Risager (2005) concludes that learning intercultural competence is a process. Furthermore, Witte (2011) states that intercultural competence is “more than mere knowledge since it includes affective and psychological traits which can have a transformative effect on the cognition and behavior of the learner” (p. 105).

Borghetti (2011) proposes, in an article published in the same volume as the previously cited one, a methodological model for teaching intercultural competence in classrooms, arguing that teachers need a practical model to reach determined educational goals. The model builds on the same definition of intercultural competence and on the same principles of teaching it as in the writings referred to above, but it also goes to greater details in the order and the manner in which different facets of intercultural competence should be covered in teaching. Borghetti’s model was formulated so that, firstly, an experimental research project was conducted, namely an Intercultural Competence course at a university. Secondly, the data from this project was used to find guidelines for analyzing 12 existing models of intercultural competence. The researcher has described the model in the following way: “[T]his framework describes competence proposing a length of time in which the competence is stimulated through a language course” (p. 147). The model is illustrated in the form of the following graph.

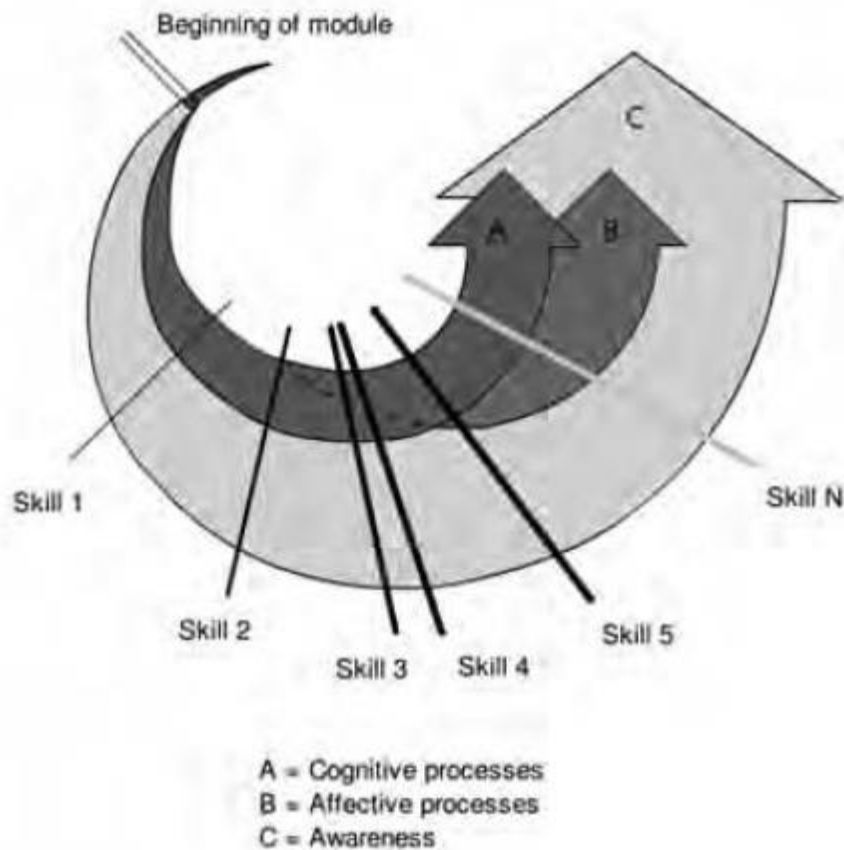


Figure 1. The dynamic model, Borghetti (2011, p. 148).

The teaching module starts with the provoking of cognitive processes, which involve acquiring knowledge, or structured information, about one's own and the target culture. This demands that students possess a method of observing and analyzing cultures. After covering cognitive aspects of competence for some time, and after creating a relationship between the students and the teacher, students' affective processes, or emotional intelligence, begin to be stimulated. Thus in this second phase, students take a more active and personal role in reflecting cultural diversity, which was viewed in a more analytical way in the first phase. Awareness-related processes both result from and advance cognitive and affective processes. Cultural awareness and intercultural awareness are related to cognitive processes, and self-awareness is related to affective processes. All of these forms of awareness are building blocks to critical cultural awareness. Finally, it is the skills that connect competence and performance in this model.

Furthermore, Borghetti (2011) illustrates how the above-mentioned theoretical points can be transferred into methodological principles, using the experimental course as an example.

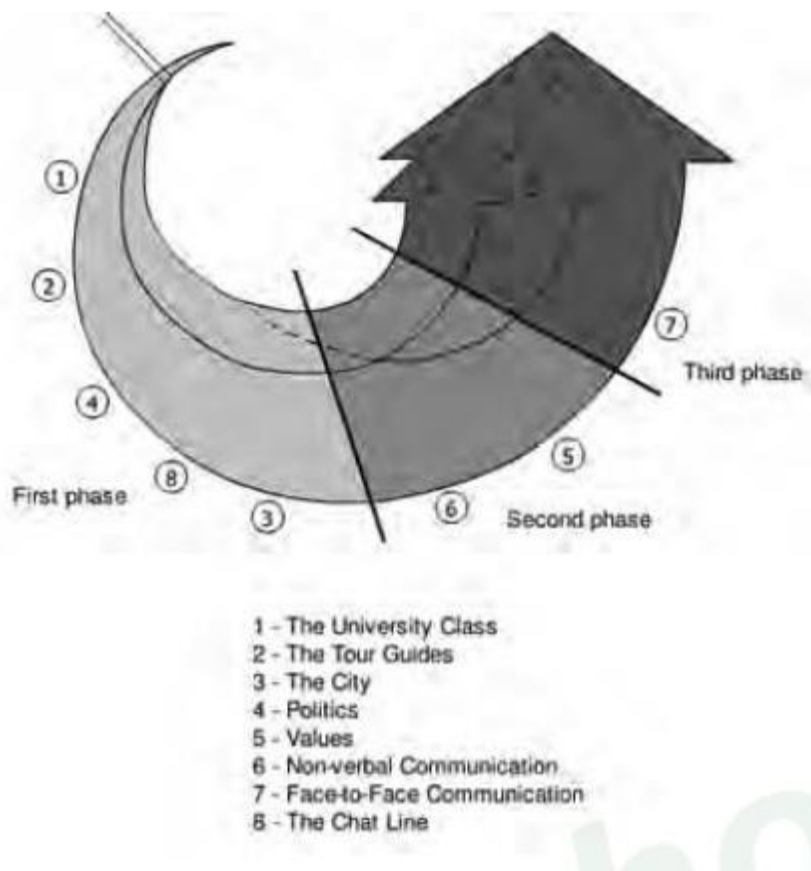


Figure 2. The model as a taxonomy for methodological principles. Borghetti (2011, p. 153).

The first phase advances students' cognitive processes, the second phase their affective processes, and the third phase their intercultural competence in a wider way, engaging them ethically and socio-politically. In more detail, during the first phase students should acquire and use skills such as researching new information, connecting cultural facts, observing, and listening. Such skills can be promoted by activities like offering different cultural texts to the students and discussing subjects that enable intercultural comparisons. Skills pursued in the second phase include empathetic listening, self-analysis, and challenging ethnocentric tendencies. Exercises designed for this purpose should stimulate emotions and self-reflection in the pupils. Activities springing from drama theory and games designed for developing one's confidence are suggested as example activities. The third phase concentrates on improving the students' critical cultural awareness by acquiring skills such as "Judging critically; Assuming responsibility; Decision making; Collaboration skills" (156). Activities need to be complex and highly engaging in a problem solving mode.

Borghetti's model develops on the aforementioned three facets of intercultural competence, namely skills, knowledge, and attitudes. She labels knowledge more widely as cognitive processes and attitudes as affective processes. Also, Borghetti elaborates more on language awareness as a concept which both enables and results from cognitive and affective processes. The model shows how the different facets of intercultural competence relate to each other and in which order they should be stimulated. It is a model which has solid foundations in research and which can be used as the basis of teaching in many different situations. It could, therefore, also be used in the Finnish basic education when attempting to help pupils develop their intercultural competence. Although in basic education English teaching is usually organized in school years instead of courses, and cultural aspects are taught together in the same lessons as language instead of a separate course, the same approach of first simulating pupils' cognitive processes, secondly their affective processes, and thirdly their critical cultural awareness could give teachers a practical and a developmental model to use. Basing their practice on a model like this could give teachers practical guidelines in addition to the brief, abstract goal stated in the curriculum for basic education.

In conclusion, intercultural competence is something that is activated in a third space between the learner's and another culture. It is knowledge, skills, attitudes and awareness, and learning it is a process where learners reflect on their own background as well as on the foreign culture. Teaching intercultural competence should be done in a progressive, structured, individual and experimental way, and cultures should be learned not as stable, simple ones but having many different groups within. Teachers working in grades 7-9 in basic education need to have a general idea of the meaning of this concept to be able to teach according to the goals set in the core curriculum. Having knowledge about a model such as Borghetti's would help teachers by giving them practical ideas, including the order in which different aspects of intercultural competence can be taught and giving concrete examples of activities for each step.

2.4 Ecological theory

In this section, the ecological theory of learning is presented particularly as to how it encourages promoting authenticity, emotions, and interaction in learning, in relation to the subgoal G2:

The growth to cultural diversity and language awareness
G2 to encourage the pupil to find interesting English-language contents and operating environments, which widen their understanding of the globalizing world of the possibilities of acting in it

Van Lier (2004) explains in his book that the ecological learning theory originates from ecology, which was initially the study of environment and ecosystems, but which later came to mean an ecocentric or geocentric perspective, where “humans are part of a greater natural order” (p.3) as opposed to the anthropocentric worldview. Deep ecology is searching for “new methods of research that take account of the full complexity and interrelatedness of processes that combine to produce an environment” (p. 4), while shallow ecology is just attempting to fix problems in the environment caused by humans. Both of these forms of ecology can be applied to education as well, with deep ecology bringing a “sense of vision and purpose, and an overt ideology of transformation” (p. 4).

Van Lier discusses the ten most important aspects of the ecological approach: relations; context; patterns, systems; emergence; quality; value; critical; variability; diversity; activity. Of these ten, I will concentrate on *relations* and *activity*. “Ecological linguistics (EL) focuses on language as relations between people and the world, and on language learning as ways of relating more effectively to people and the world. The crucial concept is that of *affordance*, which means a relationship between an organism (a learner, in our case) and the environment that signals an opportunity for an inhibition of action. The environment includes all physical, social and symbolic affordances that provide grounds for activity.” (p. 4). Therefore, in the ecological theory, learning is something that happens in interaction with the learner’s environment, starting with the affordances around him or her.

Furthermore, according to van Lier (2004), “[e]cological linguistics studies language and language learning as areas of activity” (p. 7). As van Lier explains, learners learn “by carrying out activities” of different sorts, working alone or together, and they are autonomous, which means that they have the authorship of their own actions and are emotionally connected to their actions and speech (p. 8). Moreover, autonomy is linked to the concept of *authenticity*, as illustrated by van Lier (1996): “an action is authentic when it realizes a free choice and is an expression of what a person genuinely feels and believes” (p. 13). Sometimes authenticity is simply referred to as materials or activities that were not planned directly for language learning purposes, but van Lier states that is more than just that. Learners may indeed benefit from such materials, especially if they are chosen to suit the level of the learner, but essentially, authentication can happen also without them (p.123-145).

The subgoal G2 is connected to the ecological theory and especially to its aspects *relations* and *activity*, as the goal demands that learners find interesting English-language contents and operating environments. Finding contents and operating environments can be an autonomous activity that furthers authentic learning, and it can also be about relations, namely relations to possibly other students in foreign countries and also relations to the environments where students learn. The goal also emphasizes the active role of the student, which enforces the autonomous and authentic viewpoint.

2.5 Language awareness

This section aims to look at what is meant by *language awareness* and what its role is in language teaching abroad and in Finland, as it is mentioned as a learning goal in English teaching in grades 7-9 in the national curriculum for basic education: “**The growth to cultural diversity and language awareness**” (2014, p. 349), explained by the three subgoals, particularly by G3 (below).

The growth to cultural diversity and language awareness
G3 to direct the pupil to discover what kinds of regularities there are in the English language, how similar things are expressed in other languages and to use concepts of linguistics to support his or her learning

Van Lier (1996) devotes a book to discussing interaction, and, particularly, awareness, autonomy and authenticity in the language curriculum. According to van Lier, “all new learning will be impossible unless it can be related to existing knowledge --- and experience” (p. 10) and “[t]o learn something new one must first notice it” (p. 11). One must, therefore, be aware of the thing to be learned, pay attention to it, and process it, which means connecting it to “structures (patterns of connections) that exist in our mind” (p. 11). In learning language, different kinds of things need to be noticed when learning different aspects of language, for example the meanings of words or pronunciation. Van Lier links this noticing to the ecological learning theory and affordances: “the kinds of things that may guide – or encourage – appropriate attention-paying” are affordances, possible beginnings to an active learning process, as defined by Guerrettaz and Johnston (2013, p. 782). Language awareness is, according to van Lier (1996), important in all language learning, and awareness of other learning-related things such as learning strategies is needed in education (p. 12).

Van Lier examines four different conceptions of language awareness. Firstly, “LA is a person’s sensitivity to and conscious awareness of the nature of language and its role in human life” (Donmall 1985, p. 7; as cited by van Lier, 1996, p. 79). This is a definition written early in the history of the language awareness movement, and it can be understood in a huge number of ways. Secondly, Hawkins (1987) gives more functional guidelines to teaching language awareness, including “connecting different aspects of language education (English, modern languages, minority languages)”, “contrastive study in foreign language classes” (p. 5, as cited by van Lier, 1996, p. 79), as well as spiking students’ curiosity about language, battling discrimination, and making “pupils’ contacts with language --- simply more fun” (p. 6, as cited by van Lier, 1996, p. 79). Hawkins’s points about connections and comparisons between the teaching of different languages are repeated in the national curriculum’s subgoal G3: “to direct the pupil to discover --- how similar things are expressed in other languages”.

A third understanding of language awareness is *knowledge about language*, KAL (p. 80), which “is often interpreted as a renewed call for formal grammar teaching”, and is “constantly in danger of reverting to the old days of sentence parsing, rote memorization of rules and exceptions, or even

prescriptive ways of using a particular preferred ('standard') variety of language 'properly'" (p. 80) According to van Lier, there is continual debate about whether or not explicit language teaching is needed or not, and some oppose to it, maintaining that language learning should be "implicit, subconscious, acquisition", while others support it, coupling language learning with the terms "explicit, conscious, learning, and phonics" (p. 81). As very different views of learning are advocated in the name of knowledge about language, van Lier stresses that consciousness-raising and prescriptive grammar teaching are not synonymous. In prescriptive grammar teaching, grammar is learnt for the sake of itself, not to achieve other things, and it is essential to adjust to certain language standards. By contrast, awareness-raising is supposed to be "organic" instead of "mechanic" and more like "teaching learning" instead of "teaching grammar" (Rutherford, 1987, pp. 154-155; as cited by van Lier, 1996, p. 81).

Another perspective on language awareness, presented by van Lier, is critical language awareness, which examines "power, control, and manipulation in language use in society" and "language as a form of social practice, or *discourse*" (p. 82). If critical language awareness is used in studying the "institutionalized discourse" of the school, new guidelines for the school can be created with the participation of administrators, teachers, and students (Corson 1990, p. 59 and 70; as cited by van Lier, 1996, p. 82). Critical language awareness also advances "critical thought and democratic decision-making", so there should be no hidden political or ideological incentive behind it, besides openly expressed basic values.

Furthermore, van Lier (1996) discusses language awareness in schools. He notes that there are a few issues in language awareness teaching that need to be focused on in research. Language awareness is not merely information about grammar, but also about interaction and pragmatics, for example (p. 93). Different features of language awareness could be taught to different age groups. Assessing pupils' skills in language awareness may be complicated as it is possible to have awareness for certain linguistic matters even if one cannot express that awareness. Also, teachers should be able to work together and authorities should plan the educational system so that it is conceivable (p. 94). Moreover, teaching of language awareness should go together with autonomy and authenticity: "the student must be offered meaningful choices, and be held responsible for

those choices” and “the raw material for awareness-raising is to be found all around the student, in the real world, rather than between the covers of a textbook” (p. 95).

To conclude van Lier’s ideas, language awareness is generally sensitivity and conscious awareness of language. More precisely, it can be linking different characteristics of language teaching, for example the teaching of the pupils’ mother tongue and of foreign languages. Also, it is important to make language learning fun and interesting for the students and to fight prejudice. Knowledge about language is a debated topic, but pupils need to have certain knowledge about language. Critical language awareness aims to expose power, control and manipulation in language use, and it can be used as a tool in schools as well.

As van Lier emphasized that raising awareness is not the same as prescriptive grammar teaching, Hawkins (1987) gives a proposition of how to teach a foreign language in school with attention on language awareness: with a dual strategy, “(i) development of the pupil’s insight into pattern in language” and “(ii) getting the pupil to transact real ‘speech acts’ in the foreign language” (p. 184). The first strategy, helping pupils spot pattern, can be done, for example, by showing students pairs of phrases and having them conclude whether the pattern is the same, and incorporating such assignments in all exams. After discovering and discussing a pattern, students can write it down in their own words and keep an “inventional grammar” of what they have learned. Several phrases in the L2, following the pattern, can also be memorized and recorded in this “inventional grammar”. In the end-of-the-year tests the students are to reflect on their pattern and on what more they learned about it during the year. To realize the second strategy, “Promoting real ‘speech acts’ in the foreign language”, Hawkins proposes several ideas, such as using the target language as much as possible, organizing intensive sessions, bringing older students into class to enhance the learning of both the younger and older children, and utilizing native speakers and linked schools in the target language country. Finally Hawkins remarks that ultimately, learning a foreign language happens in the target culture, in connection with native speakers.

Certain ones of Hawkins’ ideas are still of relevance today, although some of them can be contested in the light of more recent writings. As discussed in chapter 2.2 in this paper, teaching of

foreign languages has changed because of globalization, and especially English needs to be taught in a different way than before, with the ideal not being the native speaker anymore, but instead learning to communicate with and understand non-native varieties as well. Also, using only the target language in the class is not the goal anymore, as de la Campa and Nassaji (2009) argue in their article, because using L1 in a L2 classroom can give the students a beneficial cognitive and sociolinguistic tool.

However, Hawkins's thoughts about insight into pattern and intentional grammar have been confirmed multiple times, for example by Hung and Zhang (2012) whose article concerns teaching grammar for language awareness "as a means rather than an end" (Rutherford, 1987, as cited by Hung & Zhang, 2012, p. 234). The writers also cite Willis, who suggests that learner-oriented consciousness-raising teaching involves the following characteristics: "a). Learners are guided to observe language through identification. b). Learners are directed to investigate linguistic features. c). Learners are given time to test their hypotheses about the grammar/language they have learnt already, and then to systematise language features that they notice." (Willis, 1996a; Willis and Willis, 1996b, 2001, 2007, as cited by Hung and Zhang, 2012, p. 237). This kind of grammar learning where students themselves observe language, where they are guided to identify regularities and then allowed to test them, is similar to the learner-centered, inductive style of learning promoted by Hawkins. The subgoal G3 in the national curriculum seems to demand for corresponding instruction: "to direct the pupil to discover what kinds of regularities there are in the English language" (p. 349). This curriculum sets the learner in the limelight by using the word discover: instead of being told by the teacher what the grammar rules are, the pupil is active in finding regularities him/herself.

Smeds's article (2011) concentrates on language awareness and its teaching from a Finnish point of view. According to Smeds, language awareness has become very important in foreign language learning in Finland, partly because of how European language politics have developed (p. 223). Smeds compares language awareness to a sort of a grammar which deals with entities more extensive than structures (p. 224). As a dictionary tells which words the language is composed of, a grammar tells how to use these words to formulate a sentence. Grammar aka metacognition can

be expanded to how sentences are used, which would be pragmatic-sociolinguistic grammar. Grammar or metacognition can handle the relationship between the language user and the language, which is the grammar of linguistic identity. In its widest sense grammar or metacognition can concern the relationships between different languages. According to Smeds, language awareness advances language learning on the micro level and advances perceiving broader connections on the macro level (p. 224).

For Smeds, language is too all-encompassing a phenomenon to be defined narrowly, but it is certain that language cannot be observed from the point of view of monolingualism. Therefore, language awareness appears accurately in general and comparative linguistics, and the knowledge from this field should be popularized and used in all language teaching in schools, whether it is L1 or L2 teaching. Smeds presents an example of how Germanic languages could be taught in a language awareness-raising way: with an integrated curriculum where, for instance, the verb 'to be' was taught in English, Swedish, and German at the same time and comparatively. The same verb could be introduced passively in other Germanic languages to promote receptive skills. Discussing how similar things are expressed in yet other language families or the pupils' native language also furthers language awareness. A thematic and synthetic approach is usually language awareness-friendly, but schools often apply a fragmentive and analytic approach (pp. 226-227).

As Smeds's article was written during the validity of the previous national curriculum for basic education from 2004, the author notes that there is no direct mention of language awareness as a goal in the national curriculum. Teaching language awareness would be also teaching life skills and breaking artificial barriers between different school subjects (p. 227). We can now see that in the national curriculum for basic education (2014), language awareness is indeed set as a goal. For example, "Cultural diversity and language awareness" is one of the principles of the operating environment, meaning that in schools, "many different identities, languages and religions exist side by side in schools, and the community respects and utilizes this variety. Language awareness needs to be taken into account in that multilingualism is appreciated, attitudes towards languages are discussed, and the significance of language in learning, interaction and the building of identities is understood" (p. 28). This principle seems to take into account critical language

awareness, as the power that languages have is considered and different linguistic identities are supported. Like Smeds (2011) pointed out, language awareness can help recognize broader connections on the macro level.

Also, as mentioned before in this paper, “The growth to cultural diversity and language awareness” is one of the goals set for English teaching in grades 7-9, and the subgoal G3 below (p. 349) seems to be a definition of one aspect of language awareness. G1 and G2 also reflect language awareness in their own ways, particularly G1, as it concerns larger connections about language. According to the national curriculum, the students thus need to grow to not only cultural diversity, but also to language awareness in English education, and the subgoals instruct how it is done.

2.6 Teaching materials in English education

Teaching materials were mentioned multiple times by the teachers, which caused me reflect on what their actual role is in language teaching. Traditionally, materials such as textbooks have indeed been a crucial part of language learning in classrooms. This section presents the various ways in which teaching materials may affect the whole learning experience.

As materials such as textbooks are widely used in teaching, Guerrettaz and Johnston (2013) discuss the relationship between teaching materials and the concept of classroom ecology. Classroom ecology means “the totality of participants, relationships, structures, objects, and processes that together constitute the shared experience of classroom language teaching and learning” (Tudor, 2011; van Lier 1996, as cited by Guerrettaz and Johnston, p. 779, 2013). Viewing classrooms as ecosystems and “complex settings” (p. 781) leads to the conclusion that any single component, such as teaching materials, should not be studied separately but as it connects to the other components (p. 783).

According to the authors, much of the research done on materials is analysis on content which ignores what happens in the classroom (p. 780). There are studies on how teachers use materials, but not many of them are not classroom-based either, which can be problematic, as reportedly teachers' statements of their beliefs can differ from what they do in practice (p. 781). That is why the authors take a classroom-based approach in their research. Utilizing the concept of classroom ecology, they delve into the relationships between *participants*, *processes*, *structures*, and *artifacts*. Participants here refer to the students and teachers, processes to "systematic series of actions --- such as learning, teaching, and classroom discourse", structures to forces such as curriculums and power, and artifacts to concrete objects, such as materials. Other central concepts for the study are *affordances* and *emergence*, the former meaning a possible beginning to an active learning process, and the latter signifying how different affordances are enabled by different practices, e.g. different uses of the textbook (p. 782).

By studying classroom discourse, Guerrettaz and Johnston found out that materials played important roles in the classroom, even ones that were not planned by the teacher. The three main components that the materials affected were (1) the curriculum, (2) classroom discourse, and (3) language learning. Namely, (1) the curriculum of the analyzed English course was ultimately based on the materials, i.e. the textbook, and on going over a certain number of chapters in it. Therefore the textbook defined success and progress on the course, and activities done in class were deemed more important than others if they were from the textbook. The participants were even found to refer to the materials as "an actor with an agency of its own" (p. 784-785).

The materials influenced (2) classroom discourse greatly, as 83% of the classroom discourse on the course had something to do with them. The researchers looked at the *topic*, *type* and *organization of discourse*. It seems that fill-in-the-blank and correct-the-error types of activities in the textbook, that included content which the students could not relate to, elicited discourse whose type was "the elicitation and production of target forms" (p. 786) and the topic being the grammatical concept discussed. Looking at the organization of discourse reveals that during these activities, the discourse was very simple and students, as well as the teacher, did not speak much, following mainly the Initiation-Response-Evaluation model. Consequently, these kinds of activities did not offer many affordances. However, open-ended exercises which the students could relate to

offered far more affordances for richer language use, although the type of discourse that emerged was not always what was planned by the writers of the textbook (p. 785-788).

The authors tried to capture the relationship between materials and (3) language learning, arguing that learners do not straightforwardly take in the information given in textbooks. Rather, writers of the books have intents for the kinds of affordances that the activities should offer, but when used in the classroom, they may offer unintended, or *emergent*, affordances. Some of the activities during the English course prompted the intended, often mechanical, affordances and others offered emergent ones for meaningful language use, but rarely activities offered affordances for both. It was found that when students can relate to the content of the materials, interaction emerged between the materials and the students, and the students then involved in meaningful discourse, which opened language learning possibilities. Thus “the uniqueness of the individual participants and the unpredictable nature of interaction were fundamental to the emergence of meaningful language learning opportunities” (p. 791).

Guerrettaz and Johnston conclude their article arguing firstly that “the materials-discourse relationship is a key dynamic of the classroom ecology” (p. 792) because the teaching materials affected the classroom discourse to a great extent, and secondly that in the classroom ecology, distal participants, i.e. material designers, were present. They also point out that it should be questioned how textbooks are actually used in classrooms, and classroom ecology can be seen as an appropriate way of framing the question of the role of the materials in the second language classroom. Teachers should consciously choose how they use textbooks and administrators should be mindful of what materials are chosen.

Moreover, on the topic of teaching materials, Hildén (2011) reports the results of a Finnish research project which explored how the concept of developing cultural identities is understood and practiced in language teaching. One discovery was that when teachers depend on teaching materials excessively, authenticity is reduced, and that bringing teachers’ own assignments and themes to the classroom adds to the meaningfulness and uniqueness of the learning experience (p. 14).

It can be derived that teaching materials may take a significant place in the outlook of a learning module – the whole curriculum of the course may be defined by the chapters of a textbook, and the materials may greatly influence the classroom discourse and therefore affordances available to students. This, of course, ultimately affects learning. Following the textbook closely does not always guarantee the best learning results if some of the exercises do not provide affordances for meaningful interaction and rich language use. When the teacher brings his or her own activities to the classroom, the authentic learning experience may improve.

3. Data and methodology

To collect data for this study, a group interview was organized with two English teachers, working in *yläkoulu*. It was, as described in Eskola and Suoranta's handbook about qualitative research (1998), a theme-centered interview (*teemahaastattelu*), meaning that the themes or topics of the interview were decided beforehand, and an attempt was made at controlling that the interviewees discussed all of those themes (section 3.1.1 *Haastattelu*, para. 6). In this study, the themes were the goals mentioned in the extract of the national core curriculum that the participants received. This extract on a sheet of paper was also an indirect way of controlling the discussion as I was not physically present in the room. The sheet could obviously not directly control the discussion like a human participant, but it practically served as a chronological guide to how the discussion unfolded. Nevertheless, the interviewees had the chance to linger on certain topics or to pass some with less attention, depending on their interests. That is another point about theme-centered interviews discussed by Eskola and Suoranta (1998): this type of an interview is, despite the given themes, quite free as the participants can bring forth their own viewpoints (section 3.1.1, para. 10).

Instead of interviewing only one person, a group of two interviewees was formed to be interviewed at the same time. The group interview method was chosen for this study because of its specific advantages, discussed by Eskola and Suoranta (1998). "It is possible to discover more knowledge with it because the participants can think back together, evoke memories, support and encourage each other, and so on" (chapter 3.1.2 *Ryhmähaastattelu*, para. 2). This was possible in the interview conducted for this study as the participants knew each other very well and had worked in the same school for a long time. Also, a reason to arrange group interviews is trying to reach understanding and insight into a matter (chapter 3.1.2, para. 6), which was exactly the purpose in this study – to understand teachers' own perspectives on the national curriculum. According to Eskola and Suoranta, this type of an interview stimulates the participants' possibly differing opinions on a topic. However, if the group is homogeneous, as it was in this study, the participants understand each other well and may commence a fruitful conversation. As mentioned

previously, the two participants were on their own during the interview as I simply gave them the topic, which is what Eskola and Suoranta recommend: “In general, the interviewer’s role is to get the conversation started and after that be as quiet as possible” (chapter 3.1.2, para. 11).

The sheet of paper that the teachers were presented with contained the instructions for the interview, which was to discuss how they would implement this text of the new national curriculum in practice, and if they wanted, to make notes on paper. It also included an extract from the national curriculum: the goal in English education in grades 7-9 which considers the growth to cultural diversity and language awareness in English education. The same instructions were also given to the participants orally. The text was in Finnish, and the teachers discussed in Finnish, their mother tongue. They gave me the permission to record the discussion and to use the recording in compiling this thesis. The length of the recording is 34.59 minutes.

Afterwards, the discussion was transcribed from the recording and qualitative content analysis was performed on the transcript. As summarized in Julien’s article about content analysis (2008), it is “the intellectual process of categorizing qualitative textual data into clusters of similar entities, or conceptual categories, to identify consistent patterns and relationships between variables or themes” (p. 121).

The teachers were asked to discuss the following extract from the national curriculum, from p. 349, which is in the form of a table. The table includes the first one of the five goals in English education for grades 7-9, called The growth to cultural diversity and language awareness, which has three subgoals under it (G1, G2, G3). I have translated the text from Finnish to English for this paper, and below is also the original Finnish text that was given to the participants.

Original Finnish extract:

Kasvu kulttuuriseen moninaisuuteen ja kielitietoisuuteen
T1 edistää oppilaan taitoa pohtia englannin asemaan ja variantteihin liittyviä ilmiöitä ja arvoja antaa oppilaalle valmiuksia kehittää kulttuurienvälistä toimintakykyä
T2 kannustaa löytämään kiinnostavia englanninkielisiä sisältöjä ja toimintaympäristöjä, jotka laajentavat käsitystä globalisoituvasta maailmasta ja siinä toimimisen mahdollisuuksista
T3 ohjata oppilasta havaitsemaan, millaisia säännönmukaisuuksia englannin kielessä on, miten samoja asioita ilmaistaan muissa kielissä sekä käyttämään kielitiedon käsitteitä oppimisensa tukena

My translation:

The growth to cultural diversity and language awareness
G1 to promote the pupil's skill to reflect on the phenomena and values related the status and varieties of English and to prepare the pupil to develop their intercultural competence
G2 to encourage the pupil to find interesting English-language contents and operating environments, which widen their understanding of the globalizing world of the possibilities of acting in it
G3 to direct the pupil to discover what kinds of regularities there are in the English language, how similar things are expressed in other languages and to use concepts of linguistics to support his or her learning

4. Analysis

The teachers discussed how they would implement in practice the first three learning goals which are found under the title "Growth to cultural diversity and language awareness". They analyzed what seemed to be new in the goals, what had already existed in previous curricula, and which emphases had been slightly changed for this curriculum. Their experience as language teachers enabled them to compare the shifts in emphases that had occurred along the years. The two teachers analyzed each of the three goals separately. The teachers will be called here teacher A and teacher B for anonymity.

4.1 Varieties of English and intercultural competence

The first goal, G1, is "to promote the pupil's skill to reflect on the phenomena and values related to the status and varieties of English and to prepare the pupil to develop their intercultural competence". When discussing the first part of this goal (to promote the pupil's skill to reflect on the phenomena and values related to the status and variants of English) Teacher A, along with her colleague, contrasted this ideal with views of earlier years. Both participants remembered that along the years, they had been directed to speak no other varieties but British or American English, and preferably British.

(1) Group Interview

B: Sillon ihan ennen vanhaan ku minäki oon ollu nuori opettaja, nii sillon ei oikeestaan ollu muita ku tuo amerikanenglanti ja brittienglanti

A: Nii

B: Ja ehkä australianenglanti mainittu, mutta että ei oo juurikaan puhuttu, että pikemminki kehoitettiin tavallaan että pitäs niinku meijänki pyrkiä siihen brittienglantiin mieluummin

A: Niihän se oli joo, niinku

B: Se amerikanenglantiki oli vähän niinku huono juttu mut tota, nythä se on tämä International English

B: Back in the old days when I was a young teacher, there were not really others than American English and British English

A: Yes

B: And maybe Australian English was mentioned, but it was rarely talked about, and we were rather urged to strive for British English

A: That's how it was, like

B: American English was kind of a bad thing, but now there is the International English

The teachers had been urged to use American English or preferably RP, and also the schoolbooks had been mostly in these two varieties of English. The participants noted that in the more recent years, the emphasis had been on International English. They did not define the term International English, but commented that it had been visible in the teaching materials, which featured all the different varieties of English, including, for example, Britain's internal varieties such as Scottish and Irish English, as well as African varieties. They analyzed this goal to have the undertone that there are many different kinds of Englishes which are all equal, and which can all be used for communication. These observations suggest that the curriculum is influenced by the World Englishes approach.

On the subject of the varieties of English, the teachers commented that although the ideals in teaching had changed from their earliest teaching years, the teaching of different varieties of English had already become commonplace in the latest years. This new curriculum was not the first one to establish the presentation of varieties as a part of English education. In fact, the teachers said that this subject had been on display in the teaching materials for years, making it possible for pupils to hear very different varieties from the South African accent to Irish and Scottish accents. Furthermore, the participants noted that the pupils seemed to be more accustomed to hearing spoken varieties than before; a few years back, when listening to Indian

English, for example, they would giggle and make remarks, but more recently, pupils' reactions were calmer.

The teachers had positive opinions about this recent widening of the scale of varieties offered to students, especially teacher B:

(2) Group Interview

B: Ku siellä on nämä niinku nämä eri, variantit esiintyy, ihan jo seiskaluokallaki oli, ihan mukavaa että nyttenki tässä

B: These different varieties appear already in the seventh grade, it's quite nice that they are now here too

(3) Group Interview

B: On ollu pitemmänki aikaa ja se on oikeestaan hirveen hyvä

B: They have been already for a longer time and that's actually really good

However, the participants pointed out that the powerful status of English today also has a certain negative influence in the school world: English seems to dominate in the world, even so that students cease to study other foreign languages in school. This, in teacher A's opinion, was unfavorable development: "the language skills are somehow narrowing". The teachers discussed their own experiences of travels where the knowledge of English had not helped them at all because the locals did not speak it, arguing that although English is extremely important in today's world, students should also realize that studying other languages can be useful.

The teachers also discussed Finnish speakers' English accent.

(4) Group Interview

V: Sitte tavallaan että kyllähän meidän suomalaistenki aksentille vois naureskella

A: Vois kyllä varmaan (naurua) rallienglannille ja muulle

V: (naurua) kyllä

A: On ne semmosia aika hupaisia.

V: Joo. Tavallaan ehkä että huomaa sen että se ei oo se pointti se että, mutta kuhan että saa viestin, viestit toimitettua.

B: And by the way, our Finns' accent could be made fun of, too

A: It could be, probably (laughter) the rally English and so on

B: (laughter) yes

A: They are quite funny.

B: Yeah. In a way, to notice that that's not the point, but as long as you get the message, the messages across.

The teachers concluded that although Finns may have a distinctive, even a humorous, accent in their English, the students should not worry about the accent too much, but to focus on communicating and being understood instead. These teachers seem to promote similar thinking as the World Englishes approach, which considers that non-natives don't need to learn to speak English exactly like natives. Rather, they need to learn to make themselves understandable, and to understand other English speakers who are often non-native speakers as well.

Overall, even though the participants were asked to discuss how they would implement the instructions of the curriculum in practice, they did not provide any examples of how they would raise students' awareness of the different varieties of English, how they would discuss the subject with the students, and what kind of negotiation strategies they would teach students to help them manage when interacting with native and non-native English speakers. Instead, they mainly referred to how the matters were presented in the teaching materials (specifically, the recordings) before and how they would be presented in the future. This suggests that they had a great trust in the teaching materials, letting the materials direct what was offered to the students in terms of variety exposure. The teachers seemingly expected the textbooks and other teaching materials to follow closely the guidance of each valid national curriculum. The recordings may be a good way to

raise students' awareness about different varieties of English, and the Finnish teaching materials may indeed be useful and up-to-date, but research shows also that when teachers bring their own materials to the classroom, learning becomes more authentic. Especially in the case of World Englishes, the students would profit from other kinds of activities as well, such as discussion.

Furthermore, the teachers were very familiar with this topic and they had a mostly positive attitude towards it. They had noticed the rise of the World Englishes approach already a couple of years ago, before the new national curriculum (2014) was written, and they had noticed that primarily from the changes in the teaching materials. The teachers' outlook seemed to be mostly positive towards this trend in teaching: they welcomed it after past years of schools favoring RP or American English only, and appeared to embrace the whole World Englishes approach with its view of equality between different varieties of English which include non-native varieties, also English spoken by Finns, and they stated that getting messages across is the key. The only drawback that they saw in the current status of English was that it diminished the number of students studying other foreign languages.

The second part of G1, "to prepare the pupil to develop their intercultural competence" made the two teachers question what intercultural competence actually meant. They did not have a clear idea of the definition of the term, but Teacher B interpreted that the concept is based on human rights and equality, including the presumption that all people and all cultures are equal, and that one must be able to get along with everyone. Teacher B commented that young people are more "global" these days because they communicate with people from different countries, for example, via online games (especially boys). According to her, they are also more self-confident than Finnish people have traditionally been, as Finns used to have a low self-esteem and did not have confidence in their skills of operating in English. In these teachers' opinion, the youth of today are completely different, and this significant change has happened during the last ten years.

(5) Group Interview

A: -- Ja, ja tota sitte ku kaikki nii nuoret on niin paljon globaalimpia nykysin ku mitä tavallaan niinku ikinä oltu että meille ehkä

B: Maapallo on niin pienentyny, kaikki on lähellä kaikkia ja voi ottaa yhteyksiä toisiinsa, keskustella jonku toisella puolen olevan kanssa olevan maapalloa olevan kanssa ja varmasti monet on tehny niin.

A: -- And, and when all young people are so much more global nowadays than they have ever been, that for us maybe

B: The Earth has shrunk, everyone is near each other and can contact each other, discuss with someone on the other side of the Earth and many have certainly done that.

The teachers' view about the meaning of intercultural competence is accurate when they say that all people and cultures are equal and one must be able to get along with everyone, in that intercultural competence is about attempting to create respectful encounters with people from a different culture as one's own. Being able to decenter and value another person's beliefs is indeed an important part of intercultural competence. Also, as intercultural competence includes reflecting on one's own culture, the newly-found self-confidence of students, mentioned by the teachers, is an important building block on the way to intercultural competence. In intercultural situations one needs to have appreciation for one's own background just as well as for others'. The participants named online games as a way for pupils to interact with people from different countries, and this experience had already made them develop their intercultural competence.

However, the teachers did not further discuss this concept in relation to teaching. They did not mention that acquiring intercultural competence is a process which demands for reflection also on the learner's own culture, and they did not discuss how this aspect can be taught in the classroom. As intercultural competence can be defined to be attitudes, knowledge, skills of interpreting and relating, and skills of discovery and interaction, the teachers recognized only the first one of these, the attitudes, as they stated that intercultural competence is based on the equality between people and cultures, and indirectly the last one, as the example of online games that the teachers mentioned could help students learn the skills of discovery and interaction. The teachers did not propose any ideas how they would teach this aspect, either by Borghetti's model or otherwise.

Rather, they trusted the students to learn these skills by encountering foreigners when doing the online activities that many young people these days do, for example playing online games. Naturally, it is desirable to enhance one's intercultural competence in 'real' interaction, outside the classroom, and if the activity is chosen by the student and therefore autonomous, it can advance authentic learning. And yet as developing students' intercultural competence is marked as a goal in the national curriculum, it is an issue that should be encountered also in the classroom.

In general, the interviewed teachers predicted that the subgoal G1 would affect language teaching in terms of teaching materials – in schoolbooks and recordings the different varieties would be present even more than before. They did not discuss how they would alter their own teaching in addition to playing the recordings of the teaching materials. The participants had a general idea of the significance the notion of intercultural competence, but they did not mention practical ideas for teaching it. The notion of intercultural competence (kulttuurienvälinen toimintakyky) was not explained elsewhere in the curriculum, and this suggests that the national curriculum could have been written in clearer language, as it can be difficult to understand exactly what it means, even for two experienced teachers. If it can be understood in many different ways and teachers will implement it in different manners, it is possible that some pupils will not receive the kind of teaching that the writers of the curriculum wished, and then the goals of basic education will not be fulfilled equally.

4.2 English-language contents and operating environments

The subgoal 2 (G2) is to encourage the pupil to find interesting English-language contents and operating environments, which widen their understanding of the globalizing world and of the possibilities of acting in it. The teachers said that English-language content should be authentic and come from many different sources, such as the Internet or magazines. The participants deemed it essential to this goal that students learn to find content and operating environments by themselves. Therefore, they should have access to the needed equipment to reach this goal. They said that otherwise students wouldn't be able to learn to find content.

(6) Group Interview

V: Tulleeke tästä sitte semmonen mieleen että meillä pitäs olla sitte niinku oppilailleki välineet niinku käytössä?

A: No minusta ilman muuta tullee että löytämään kiinnostavia englanninkielisiä sisältöjä

V: Että miten niitä muuten löytää jos ei

A: Ei löyä vaan tuolilla istuen ja kirjaa lukien

B: Does this imply that we should have like equipment available for the students, too?

A: In my opinion, yes, absolutely it does, to find interesting English-language contents

B: So how else can you find it if not

A: You can't find just by sitting on a chair and reading a book

The participants had some confusion about the meaning of 'operating environment' (toimintaympäristö). They attempted to define it as "an environment, a space and or something where a person acts and does something". They suggested a flexible learning environment classroom, online communities, organizations and their websites and iPad apps as possible operating environments. They thought this subgoal could also include the idea of networking as well. Teacher B discussed, on the topic of her ongoing project between schools in different countries, possible mediums for interaction: could it be Google Classroom or something more traditional, like collecting files made by students and sending them to the team school abroad? Should the communication be completely free, which would be more fun more for the students but also riskier, or controlled by the teacher?

As one example of helping pupils find interesting English-language operating environments, teacher B discussed her previous experience of directing an international school project where the pupils were communicating with foreign students via different means such as Skype. She had used Skype communication with students before and she described the experience as very exciting for the students. Some of the examples of operating environments suggested by the participants, such as online communities and Skype projects, enable students to communicate with speakers from different cultural backgrounds. This connects G2 to G1, in that learning to act in the globalized world can also help in developing one's intercultural competence.

(7) Group Interview

V: Ja joskushan me on tehty sitä, että silloin ku se oli se New York-kurssi niin silloin tota, tai siis Amerikka-kurssi, niin siellä, silloinhan me tehtiin tätä että soitettiin sinne Skypellä ja

A: Mm

V: Se oli tosi jännittävää, me muutamaan kertaan otettiin se yhteys sitte ja meijänki lukion, vaikka ne oli tokalla ja abejaki nii ne oli aivan jännityksessä siinä ja

B: And sometimes we've done that, when we had the the New York course, then, or I mean the America course, there, then we did that we called them on Skype and

A: Mm

B: It was really exciting, we contacted them a few times and [the students] in our upper secondary school, even though they were on their second or third year, they were so excited there and

The teachers' thoughts about students learning to find authentic content are in line with van Lier's ideas about ecology and about the learners being autonomous and making choices, and therefore making the learning authentic. Although, according to van Lier, authentic materials do not necessarily have to be ones that are found from outside the classroom, these types of materials can serve a purpose in widening the range of language and affordances that students are exposed to. Another aspect that the teachers mentioned was that the communication on Skype was very exciting for the pupils. Emotions are linked to autonomy and authenticity, discussed by van Lier, as

the learners should be “emotionally connected to their actions and speech”, so performing activities which raise emotions in the learners can make the learning more authentic.

Besides, tasks such as contacting students abroad relate to two aspects of the ecological approach: *relations* and *activity*. According to the ecological theory, language learning is a way of *relating* more effectively to people and the world, and thus activities including social interaction such as Skyping advance language learning. Also, in the ecological theory, language is learnt through various *activities* alone or in pairs, and the kinds of international projects, proposed by the interviewed teachers, seem to be a good example of such activities. Learners are autonomous when doing those tasks, which means that they make choices on their own and are responsible for their actions. This aspect was reflected in the teachers’ reflection about the medium to be used: they were thinking whether they should let the students discuss freely with the foreign classroom, which would be more enjoyable for them, or whether they should control the discussion to avoid risks of misbehavior.

The teachers discussed what G2 would mean in practice. Would all teachers now be required to offer such possibilities for pupils? Would they now be obligated to plan activities in addition to the ones in the textbook? They considered that some teachers usually just picked the “basic” exercises in the textbooks, and even if the teacher’s guide in the materials suggested different activities, they just skipped them. In their opinion, this curriculum does expect more effort from teachers because the whole new national curriculum attempts to raise and educate future adults into cosmopolitans, and English lessons were a natural possibility for realizing this goal. The teachers felt that the subgoals G1 and G2 were examples of this general objective of the curriculum.

The teachers also predicted that the subgoal G2 would change the teaching materials in that they would offer more interesting contents for pupils. They thought that the contents would have to come from different sources, such as the internet, and the pupils would need access to the equipment to learn how to find content by themselves. According to these teachers, gaining access to aforementioned equipment places more demands on schools as well: they need to

provide more technology for students. The subgoal G2 thus demands, in the teachers' opinion, more from the teachers, the teaching materials, and from the schools.

4.3 Regularities in the English language

Goal 3, G3, is to direct the pupil to discover what kinds of regularities there are in the English language and how similar things are expressed in other languages, and to use concepts of linguistics to support his or her learning.

(8) Group Interview

B: -- Ni siksihän tää on tavallaan niinku että säännönmukaisuuksia, sehän on kielioppia. Joo.

A: Se on kieliopin opetusta, tuo on naamioitu vain (naurua)

B: Joo

A: Vähän eri, vähän erikuuloseksi

B: -- That's why this is, like, regularities, that's grammar. Yeah.

A: It's grammar teaching, it's just disguised (laughter)

B: Yeah

A: To sound different, a little different

(9) Group Interview

A: Että mitä tämä oikeen tarkoittaa, että käyttämään kielitiedon käsitteitä oppimisensa tukena? Tarkottaako se sitä, että heidän pitää ne jotkut lainalaisuudet kieliopista, niin ne pitää niinku osata, ja

A: And what does this really mean, to use concepts of linguistics to support his or her learning? Does it mean that they have to know certain regularities in the grammar, and

The teachers found it amusing that the word grammar was not mentioned in the goal, although "regularities" clearly meant grammar, in their opinion, and the writers of the curriculum had attempted to disguise that. The participants did not analyze why it was put this way, but they interpreted this entire subgoal to be about grammar and they made their further comments from this viewpoint. They commented that it was fairly new that the curriculum stated "to use concepts of linguistics" as there had been a trend recently not to use many grammar concepts in teaching.

The teachers welcomed this reform, as they felt that this goal gave grammar more importance than the previous one. They remarked that in the latest years, grammar has been presented too superficially in the teaching materials, and this has started to become visible in the students' language skills. According to them, this could prove a problem for those wishing to study in the upper secondary school and take the matriculation exams because, as the teachers said, language and grammar changes but the matriculation exams do not. The superficial presentation of grammar can be problematic also for anyone who may need English in their future work life, where exact expression is needed for communication and credibility. According to the participants, teaching grammar was especially important to Finnish students, as Finnish and English are from different language families and many structures are significantly different in the two.

The subgoal G3 also instructs to compare the regularities of English to how these things are expressed in other languages. This was very familiar to the participants, as they said that they had always been doing this. They had been comparing English ways of expression to Swedish, French, German and Finnish ones.

In general, the participants stated that G1 and G2 were fairly similar as goals, and G3 separated from them.

(1) Group Interview

A: Joo ja tässä on nyt sitte tämä, tämä, tämä tavote rypästy tässä että kasvu kulttuuriseen moninaisuuteen ja siinä on kaks ekaa se kulttuurinen moninaisuus ja kielitietoisuus on sitte erikseen tämä yksikseen tämä T3 täällä että

A: Yeah and here we have now this, this, we've gone through the goal here about the growth to cultural diversity and the two first ones are cultural diversity and language awareness and then this G3 is here alone separately so that

The teachers did not seem to be knowledgeable that the concept of language awareness covers also, on the micro level, patterns of language and offers options to traditional grammar teaching, as they viewed that only the subgoals G1 and G2 concerned language awareness and the subgoal G3 was related to something completely different, "alone separately". The teachers' comments showed different opinions to different aspects of language awareness. On the one hand, they seemed to be on the traditional side in relation to teaching knowledge about language, as they interpreted this subgoal to refer primarily to recommencing more detailed grammar teaching, which is exactly what van Lier (1996) spoke against. Also, they did not discuss teaching grammar inductively in the style of Hawkins (1987), for example, so it seems that they did not grasp the national curriculum's possible allusions to language awareness –type of grammar teaching. On the other hand, the comparative aspect of language awareness was quite familiar to these teachers, as they had always been comparing different languages in grammar teaching. It can therefore be said that these teachers were indeed familiar with some features of language awareness, especially the comparativeness, but its viewpoints on grammar teaching were unfamiliar to them.

5. Discussion

The teachers had varied levels of knowledge of and practical ideas for each subgoal of the goal The growth to cultural diversity and language awareness. Their views of the two points of the subgoal G1, teaching different varieties of English and developing pupils' intercultural competence, were similar – they understood the reasons to why these themes should be addressed in English language teaching and they seemed to think these goals were important, but they did not propose many active ideas for teaching these points of the subgoal. When teaching about different varieties of English, the teachers mentioned having students listen to recordings that were a part of the teaching materials, but no ideas for active discussion or reflection were presented. The teachers also seemed to trust that students get accustomed to hearing different varieties of English in their free time. Similarly, regarding intercultural competence, these teachers considered that students develop their intercultural competence in their free time while playing games online, for example, but no propositions were offered for how to treat this matter in the classroom.

As to G2, helping the students find English-language contents and operating environments, the teachers had plenty of progressive ideas that they had realized in the past and ones that were in the planning process at the moment. Many of them included using technology and the Internet, were interactive and enabled students to discuss with pupils from a different country. These projects promote authentic, autonomous language learning. The teachers felt that this subgoal places demands on the teachers, the schools and on the creators of the teaching materials.

Although all of the subgoals can be said to be connected to language awareness in their own ways, the teachers only recognized G1 and G2 to be aspects of language awareness. For them, the subgoal G3 which is about discovering regularities of English, was unrelated to the first two, and was not a part of language awareness. Their view of grammar was traditional: they interpreted this goal as demanding for more precise grammar teaching, which, in their view, was much needed. They did not discuss teaching grammar in organic or inductive ways like in language

awareness-based grammar teaching. However, comparing to structures of other languages was something that the teachers had been doing already before this curriculum was written.

Another theme that arose is the role of the teaching materials. The teaching materials had multiple roles for these teachers. Firstly, the teachers reflected on the changes in pedagogic ideals that had taken place along the years during their careers through how subject matter was presented in teaching materials, for example, which varieties of English were presented in the materials before and which were now. Secondly, they expected the teaching materials to change and adapt to the demands of the curriculum valid at the time. According to the teachers' experiences, the teaching materials in Finland are good and they are always created to meet the requirements of the national curriculum, and for these reasons they trusted the materials to offer all things necessary. For example, the teachers mentioned recordings from teaching materials to be their primary resource for different varieties of English, and they expected new teaching materials to offer even more varieties, interesting English-language contents and changes to grammar teaching. Thirdly, the role of the teacher was questioned in the light of this new curriculum: the interviewed teachers considered that from now on, English teachers would be required to plan activities that were not predesigned by the creators of the materials, especially to realize subgoal G2, helping pupils find English-language contents and operating environments.

In general, the teachers viewed that the whole curriculum was written in an intention to raise pupils as cosmopolites, and that intention was manifested in English teaching in this specific goal (Growth to cultural diversity and language awareness). Yet, in their view, this part of the curriculum did not introduce anything completely new except for the addition of the word globalization and some other small alterations, and it would not revolutionize their work. The most noticeable changes were, for these participants, the introduction of the concept of intercultural competence, and the observation that the teaching of grammar seemed to gain more importance than before.

6. Conclusion

As this study aims to discover the participant teachers' interpretations and practical implementations of the extract of the curriculum, it can be concluded that the teachers view cultural diversity and language awareness in a positive light, but their conception of language awareness consists mostly of large-scale comparisons. The activities proposed for implementing this goal of the national curriculum in practice are, depending on the topic, either very creative or mostly restricted to what the materials offer, or the teachers rely on the students to develop certain skills in their freetime. However, it should be taken into account that the teachers most likely could not express everything that they do in teaching in relation to this topic in one interview.

It can be concluded that the curriculum could have been written in more detail as it would have been helpful to explain certain concepts like intercultural competence and language awareness somewhere in the text, and maybe even some detailed ideas of how to carry out the goals could have been given if some readers of the curriculum are not familiar with the concepts. This would ensure that all teachers understand fully what is required from the teaching and it would also guarantee equal learning opportunities for the students. It should be noted, nevertheless, that based on this national curriculum, each municipality and school will also write its own, more detailed curriculum, and consequently this issue may be fixed.

This goal of the curriculum seems to expect the teachers to take an even more active role than before as the teaching materials will most likely not be able to offer all the discussion, reflection and active searching of English-language contents and materials that the national curriculum calls for. Furthermore, schools may need to provide more technology, for example laptops or tablets, for the students so they learn to search for contents. Also the students themselves will need to be active in all the subgoals: they need to reflect on the status of English, develop their intercultural competence, possibly in their free time, search for English-language contents, and discover regularities of English.

Further studies on this subject could be done comparing this national curriculum to the one of 2004, for example on their requirements on English teaching, cultural diversity and language awareness. Also, other parts of the 2014 curriculum, such as the other four goals of English education in grades 7-9, could be investigated. Teaching materials could be further studied as well, possibly in a classroom ecology framework, namely what kind of affordances Finnish teaching materials offer, especially in the teaching of cultural diversity and language awareness.

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